

Interagency Working Group on
Expanded Measures of Enrollment and Attainment (GEMEnA)
Meeting Notes
September 9, 2014

Present

Dori Allard (BLS), Stacey Bielick (AIR), Sharon Boivin (NCES), Sarah Crissey (NCES), Stephanie Cronen (AIR), Stephanie Ewert (Census), John Finamore (NSF), Dan Foley (NSF), Sarah Grady (NCES), Harley Frazis (BLS), Lisa Hudson, (NCES), Bob Kominski (Census), Shelly Martinez (OMB), Cameron McPhee (AIR), Rebecca Medway (AIR), Jon O’Bergh (OUS-ED)

1. Reflections: 5 years of GEMEnA meetings and accomplishments
 - a. Genesis of GEMEnA group
 - i. Working session resulted in a paper concluding that these credentials are not asked about in federal collections and that it is important to do so, even though these topics will be difficult to ask about in surveys
 - ii. Political interest in these topics increased with the recession
 1. Desire to learn more about people reporting “some college” – do they have credentials with labor market value?
 2. Became a Department of Education priority
 - b. Key GEMEnA activities to date
 - i. Spring 2010: focus groups and one-one-one interviews to learn what terms people use to refer to these credentials
 - ii. Fall 2010: ATES pilot study (telephone), resulting in ATES pilot report
 1. Conclusion: certification items worked well, but certificate items required additional refinement
 - iii. 2012: First items in a national collection (SIPP)
 1. 2014: first reporting on national prevalence of these credentials
 - iv. 2013: NATES
 1. This was a response rate study to determine the feasibility of conducting an adult survey by mail (due to challenges in obtaining satisfactory response rates in prior adult NHES surveys).
 2. It was a one-stage mail survey with three questionnaires sent per household. The study included an experiment in which some households received the questionnaires as three separate booklets and the others received them as one combined booklet.
 - v. 2014: ATES included in NHES feasibility survey
 1. This survey included an experiment comparing the longer ATES to the shorter CWS. A preliminary data file has been received and initial analyses have been conducted to inform the next ATES administration.
 - vi. Next: The first full scale CWS administration, and a pilot of the TWS questionnaire.
 - c. GEMEnA key values
 - i. Collaboration across federal statistical community is important
 - ii. Take the time and spend the money to do it right (e.g., take the time to refine survey questions before placing them on federal surveys)
 - iii. Document what you have done (e.g., ATES report, reports on all qualitative work posted on GEMEnA website)
 - d. Agency updates and reflections on GEMEnA work to date
 - i. Census Bureau:

1. A credentials topical module was included in the 2012 SIPP, which resulted in the first national prevalence estimates.
 2. It is very exciting to start getting this data out to the public.
 - ii. BLS
 1. Efforts are underway to potentially include some certification items on a future CPS administration.
 - iii. NSF
 1. The new NSCG will include certification items; after cognitive testing, it was decided the certificate items are not ready for this population.
 2. This was an interesting case study to see how the items might need to be adapted for different populations, such as the college-educated.
 3. This survey will ask certification field as an open ended item to better understand what fields are reported in this population (as opposed to the closed item on ATEES).
 - iv. Office of the Undersecretary (education policy)
 1. Realization of the inability to answer basic questions about how many adults have these credentials spurred an interest in this group
 2. A model for interagency collaboration
 3. Deeper appreciation for the complexity of answering questions that policymakers often assume are straightforward
 - v. OMB
 1. GEMEnA as a model for collaboration
 2. Has been helpful to have policy people in the group to help keep things focused and targeted, hoping to do this more often in working groups
2. Potential next steps for GEMEnA
 - a. CPS October supplement
 - i. Tackling enrollment as a topic, potentially replacing some of the existing items
 - b. Making sure to focus on issues that are relevant to the participating agencies
 - i. If some issues are not relevant to many agencies, then perhaps smaller subgroups should focus on these issues instead
 - c. Interest in linking to administrative data
 - i. Build rapport with states and agencies that issue credentials
 - d. BLS is working on an establishment survey that may include credential items
 - e. Don't give up on certificates
 - i. Ask more questions of certificate seekers to help figure out their path; potentially follow up with NPSAS respondents
 - f. Tackling enrollment
 - i. The challenge of trying to determine broadly what individuals are currently doing to build their skill set and knowledge; things that might not necessarily be considered traditional enrollment (e.g., not just college courses).
 - ii. There is policy interest in career pathways.
 - iii. Development work: Find people who have credentials and then ask them about their process for obtaining these credentials: was it a traditional enrollment path or was it more independent? What was the critical final step that the person completed?
 - g. Important to understand the differences in the credential estimates that will be obtained across surveys and how to interpret these differences.
 - i. A helpful model: work that was done to help people understand how to report/interpret health insurance estimates

GEMEnA Meeting Notes: December 2009 through September 2014

- h. Consider measuring activities that are not necessarily directly tied to work; these make better human beings
- i. Explore engagement after retirement: how do people stay engaged and continue to give back to society after so much has been invested in them?
- j. Potentially ask about certificates in the context of educational attainment items.
- k. The group will continue to meet monthly.

GEMEnA Meeting Notes: December 2009 through September 2014

Interagency Working Group on
Expanded Measures of Enrollment and Attainment (GEMEnA)

No Meeting in July/August 2014

Interagency Working Group on
Expanded Measures of Enrollment and Attainment (GEMEnA)
Meeting Notes
June 10, 2014

Present

Dori Allard (BLS), Stacey Bielick (AIR), Sharon Boivin (NCES), Sarah Carroll (NCES), Sarah Crissey (NCES), Stephanie Cronen (AIR), Stephanie Ewert (Census), Dan Foley (NSF), Harley Frazis (BLS), Lisa Hudson (NCES), Mickey Jackson (AIR), Bob Kominski (Census), Kashka Kubzdela (NCES), Shelly Martinez (OMB), Cameron McPhee (AIR), Rebecca Medway (AIR), Jon O'Bergh (OUS-ED)

1. Initial NATES results
 - a. Key credential estimates by respondent characteristics
 - b. Comparison of NATES and SIPP results
 - i. The group discussed possible reasons for any differences, including differences in the sample design and administration mode, differences in question wording on some items, and measurement error.
 - ii. GEMEnA members were not concerned about the differences in estimates given the differences in survey characteristics.
2. Review of plans for NATES nonresponse bias analysis (NRBA)
 - a. A subsample of nonrespondents to the mail questionnaires were visited in person and asked several key items from the original questionnaire.
 - b. The report will use data from this follow-up survey, supplemented by data from the sampling frame and mailed questionnaire, to address the following research questions:
 - i. Were unit respondents to the mailed NATES questionnaire different from the eligible population in terms of demographic characteristics and/or their responses to key items?
 - ii. To what extent are characteristics available from the sampling frame (which are commonly used in nonresponse adjustment procedures) correlated with responses to survey items relating to adult educational attainment?
 - iii. Were the frame-based nonresponse adjustments to the NATES sampling weights effective at reducing unit nonresponse bias?
 - iv. Is there a risk of item nonresponse bias for the key NATES estimates?
3. ATES cognitive interviews have been taking place in preparation for the 2015 instrument. Spanish interviews will take place early this fall.
4. GEMEnA members were invited to attend a briefing on early ATES 2014 results to be presented just after the GEMEnA meeting.

Interagency Working Group on
Expanded Measures of Enrollment and Attainment (GEMEnA)
Meeting Notes
May 14, 2014

Present

Dori Allard (BLS), Sharon Boivin (NCES), Sarah Carroll (NCES), Sarah Crissey (NCES), Stacey Bielick (AIR), Celeste Stone (AIR), Danielle Battle (AIR), Cameron McPhee (AIR), Stephanie Ewert (Census), Dan Foley (NSF), Harley Frazis (BLS), Lisa Hudson, (NCES), Kashka Kubzdela (NCES), Shelly Martinez (OMB), Jon O’Bergh (OUS-ED), Bob Kominski (Census)

1. Update on the NHES:Feasibility Study and the OMB briefing for NHES:15 in June
 - a. The OMB briefing will be held at 11 am on June 10 in Room F next to our regular meeting room
 - b. Goal: Share findings from NHES:Feasibility Study that will guide what we do in 2015. Specifically, use preliminary data from the NHES:FS to look at the items below.
 - i. Main response rates differences between experimental groups:
 1. ATEs (long) and CWS (short)
 2. Incentives experiment
 3. Magnet experiment
 - ii. Analyzing the differences between the child and adult questionnaire.
 1. Note that the sampling statisticians have done some additional analyses and found that the additional statistical efficiency was small relative to the logistical complexities (dual households). As a result of that analysis, the direction for 2015 has already been decided. However, the results of the NHES:FS analysis will be used to determine if changes may be needed in the future (if we want to revisit this decision).
 - iii. Evaluating differences in key population estimates – SIPP vs. NHES-ATES-CWS
 - c. Analysis of NHES:FS survey data in the OMB briefing will be minimal. AIR will only have limited survey data available (data on about two-thirds of the completed cases). These data will be made available to AIR only a few days before the OMB briefing.
2. Update on NSCG
 - a. NSF has begun their second round of cognitive interviews testing a new version of the questionnaire.
 - b. The main changes to the certification/licensure section involved making the questions more relevant to a college-education population (e.g., refining examples for this population). So far, the new section and items are working well.
 - c. In the new certificate section, there is still some confusion around the terms used in that section (e.g., masters vs. baccalaureate vs. trade school). For example, respondents tend to think of real estate as a profession, not a trade. Respondents also seem to be confused by the term “baccalaureate.” It was recommended that NSCG look at the current version of this item used in ATEs, which uses the term “post bachelors” to help improve comprehension.
 - d. After the cognitive interviews are finished, there are plans to incorporate some of the items into the January 2015 NSCG collection, with data to be released in 2016.
3. Update on CPS
 - a. A handout showing the new questions was provided at the meeting.

- b. Most of the questions are the same or very similar to what we saw previously, but a few have been edited (see handout).
 - c. BLS will be holding a technical advisory meeting on June 20 at 3:30pm.
 - d. Cognitive testing will focus on the placement of the credential items, but not the wording.
 - e. The plan is that the questions will always be asked (of everyone) in Months 1 and 5.
4. Recent activities and discussions with the credentialing community about this work:
- a. Community colleges in California and North Carolina want to be able to collect data on nondegree credentials. Their goal is to show that they are being successful. They would like to build this information into their existing data systems, and ideally make this a national effort so that they could deal with transfers between state systems. The effort is still in its infancy.
 - b. ANSI has agreed to coordinate the efforts around convening regular meetings among federal agencies since they already convene a subset of them.
 - c. Two certifying bodies are very focused on understanding the return on investment for their credentials. Both groups were encouraged to include the credentialing items in any of their own survey/data collection efforts.
 - i. The HR Certification Group found GEMEnA through the SIPP report. This group is interested in doing their own data collection to better understand if their credentials have labor market value.
 - ii. Electronics Technicians Association International is also interested in this idea of return on investment.
 - d. The Institute for Higher Education Policy is writing a report for Lumina on certificates and is citing GEMEnA's work to improve data quality on these credentials.
5. Update on the CWS and TWS
- a. Survey title: Current results from NHES:FS show that the response rates are actually lower for the shorter survey, though the difference is small.
 - i. The group discussed why this may be occurring, with one member suggesting that the survey title may be the issue. Specifically, the survey title might make people who are not in the labor force think that a survey on "credentials for work" is not relevant to them. One idea is to change the survey title from the "Credentials for Work Survey" to the "Education and Credentials for Work Survey". The group was not sure that this change would correct the issue. It was suggested that it might make sense to stick with the title of "Adult Training and Education Survey" regardless of the form type since that has had the most success with respondents. Though this might be confusing for data users, the group seemed to agree that it was more important to make sure that respondents respond.
 - ii. Next steps:
 - 1. In our ATES analysis, see if we are getting as many "noncredentialed" respondents to the CWS as we are to the ATES, as a check on whether the word "Credential" in the CWS title might be making the survey less appealing or relevant to respondents who don't have work credentials. Maybe compare the percentage of not-in-the-labor-force adults who respond to CWS vs to ATES? And the percent of adults who have no certificate, degree, certification or license in CWS vs ATES?
 - 2. In SIPP, NATES, and/or ATES: Find out what percentage of certificate holders (Best to use "true" certificate holders where we can weed out false positives) have a certification or license. (Cannot use the seeded sample because it is a non-random convenience sample.)

- b. Questionnaires to be fielded: Two separate questionnaires will be fielded in 2015:
 - i. The Training for Work Survey will be piloted with around 20,000 people.
 - ii. The Credentials for Work Survey (i.e., the shorter version of the ATES used in the NHES:2014 FS) will be administered as well.
 - iii. No single respondent will receive both questionnaires.
 - iv. ACTION ITEM: The design, versions, and differences of the various pilots, feasibility studies, and full-scale administrations of an adult credentialing survey can be confusing. Develop pictures and schematics to make this clearer.
- c. Items and issues with survey instruments:
 - i. Q3 (short certificate Q): The placement of Q3 is problematic; it will likely cause misunderstanding the certification/licensure questions. Is this worth testing in TWS? SIPP had similar issues with question ordering, but was automated. One member recommended that this issue be experimentally tested (not just cognitive labs); a split panel would be ideal. Can Q3 (shorter item) be used in lieu of Q12d (longer item)?
 - ii. Q6 (certification/license table): Group was okay with excluding certification year question.
 - 1. One member brought up the issue of using a grid.
 - a. ACTION ITEM: Make sure to look at NHES:FS data – item nonresponse, etc. before including this format in 2015.
 - iii. Q12: Goal of this question series is to weed out false positives.
 - 1. Q12b – Question from group: Why “another” university of college? Also, does the order in which these are listed reflect the frequency with which people have them in the pop? Answer: Yes.
 - iv. Q13 (number of ed certificates): New question added per expert panel meeting. Group is not sure that this item is needed. Rationale: we don’t ask about multiple bachelor’s degrees. The only benefit to this question is that it allows for the “educational certificate” term to be defined before asking the next series of questions.
 - 1. ACTION ITEM: Drop item.
 - v. Page 10 (use of “last” in lieu of “most recent”): Similar finding in the NSCG cognitive interviews.
 - vi. Q14b: Assuming Q13 is dropped, change stem wording (and preceding instruction box) to refer back to Q12d (do this in Q13 if we keep that item).
 - vii. Q16, Q26: Not really analytically helpful. NSCG only uses because it asks when complementary job was started.
 - 1. ACTION ITEM: We agreed to drop the questions asking for year of attaining certificate/completing initial job training program.
 - viii. Q18: Was in NHES FS.
 - ix. Q19: Prior iterations of the question asked if respondents “had to be” enrolled in a degree program (yes or no). The latest version, which is being used in Phase 2 of the cognitive interviews, replaced the “had to be” wording to “requirement” and thus far has resulted in less confusion in the cognitive interviews.
 - x. Q20: Another possible bin factors question. Passing test/exam is intended to be a measure of ever vs. never. TWS – must have Q12, 14a/b, but do we really need Q20?
 - 1. ACTION ITEM: Include only in the CWS (not TWS).
 - xi. GENERAL: Some discussion over why is “no” asked first in the yes/no question. This approach is consistent with NHES and useful because it makes it

- easier to implement skips. Note that Q46 is Y/N and has a skip, so that would be one reason to leave as No/Yes.
- xii. Q48f (usefulness): Why put “too soon to tell” first?
 - xiii. Q67: We were just going to put it in TWS. Discussion to continue offline. The goal is to know if there is a legal requirement. Should we be including certification here as well? This is the question that Morris used verbatim.
 - 1. POST MEETING NOTE: Suggestion to keep this question in the CWS and possibly also the TWS, but to consider it experimental. Including this item will present an opportunity for respondents to provide inconsistent responses in the Q6 grid and Q67. Though there are valid reasons for inconsistent responses (e.g., Q67 is not restricted to the respondents’ three most recent certifications/licenses) there can also be respondent error.
 - xiv. OTHER: We did not have time to ask GEMEnA about whether to drop Q10/11 (renewal of certification) or Q43-45 (employer support for noncredit coursetaking).
 - xv. POST MEETING NOTE: Several members spoke after the meeting and decided to keep all the employment questions that were flagged for possible deletion.

Interagency Working Group on
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No Meeting in April 2014

Interagency Working Group on
Expanded Measures of Enrollment and Attainment (GEMEnA)
Meeting Notes
March 11, 2014

Present

Dori Allard (BLS), Sharon Boivin (NCES), Sarah Carroll (NCES), Sarah Crissey (NCES), Stacey Bielick (AIR), Stephanie Cronen (AIR), Stephanie Ewert (Census), Dan Foley (NSF), Harley Frazis (BLS), Lisa Hudson, (NCES), Kashka Kubzdela (NCES), Shelly Martinez (OMB), Jordan Matsudaira (CEA), Rebecca Medway (AIR), Jon O’Bergh (OUS-ED)

1. The National Network of Business & Industry Associations has a 5-point agenda around credentials.
 - a. What credentials matter – common standards
 - b. Competencies required for credentials
 - c. Employer engagement – expanding workplace learning
 - i. Determining what is on the continuum / what models of work and learn programs exist is a priority.
 - ii. What are the key questions to ask in ATEES to know where on the continuum a particular program falls.
 - d. Hiring for competency, not for degree
 - e. Getting to scale – taking initial findings regarding the four points above and bringing them to scale
2. The GEMEnA expert panel will be meeting on March 14 and 17 with a focus on the certificate and work-training program /apprenticeship sections of ATEES.
3. ATEES certificates section
 - a. Changes to the items resulting from the most recent round of cognitive interviews
 - i. A note telling respondents not to include college degrees when answering the educational certificate item
 1. The group thought that using the term “degrees” might be confusing to respondents and suggested referring to particular degrees, such as Associate’s or Bachelor’s.
 - ii. Removing “institute” as an example in the educational certificate item; there are many things that go by this name that are not actually schools
 - b. Discussion questions for expert panel meeting
 - i. Whether to ask 1 certificates item or break it into 3 items asking about different kinds of certificates
 1. The group also discussed and decided against a 3rd option of asking respondents how many certificates they have and asking them to tell details about the most recent one, including items that would allow us to tell whether or not it is an educational certificate.
 - ii. Whether there is a better way to differentiate between training certificates and educational certificates
 - iii. Whether it is worth asking about the next-to-last certificate
 1. Very few people have more than 1 educational certificate; when there was just one broad certificate item, this was a way to capture additional information in case the most recent was not an educational certificate

- iv. Whether to collect provider names
 - 1. The purpose would be to see whether people who say they have an educational certificate actually list a school
 - 2. This is unlikely to happen because it is too invasive of a question and it is too much work to code the responses afterwards
 - 3. Another option might be to ask a detailed multiple choice provider item
 - v. Whether it is reasonable/possible to collapse any of the field of study categories
 - vi. Whether the response options for the hours of instruction item are the correct categories to use
 - vii. Opinion on the “add-on to a degree” item – is this confusing for someone who gets a Bachelor’s degree and then goes back to get a sub-BA certificate
4. ATES work-training program / apprenticeship section
- a. Changes to the items resulting from the most recent round of cognitive interviews
 - i. Slight rewording to the main item
 - 1. The group suggested potential additional changes including dropping the first sentence of the item and whether to include the word “formal”
 - b. Discussion questions for expert panel meeting
 - i. Whether to ask about the three types of programs separately
 - ii. Whether the response options for the program length item are the correct categories to use
 - iii. Whether the program characteristics asked about in the section are the best ones to use
 - iv. Periodicity – whether this section should ask about lifetime/ever or about the past year

Interagency Working Group on
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Meeting Notes
February 11, 2014

Present

Dori Allard (BLS), Sharon Boivin (NCES), Sarah Carroll (NCES), Sarah Crissey (NCES), Stephanie Cronen (AIR), Stephanie Ewert (Census), Dan Foley (NSF), Harley Frazis (BLS), Lisa Hudson, (NCES), Bob Kominski (Census), Shelly Martinez (OMB), Jordan Matsudaira (CEA), Rebecca Medway (AIR), Jon O’Bergh (OUS-ED), Celeste Stone (AIR)

1. The SIPP report on nondegree credentials has been released. NCES is writing a Data Point about these results.
2. Updates to NSCG after cognitive interviews and GEMEnA feedback
 - a. Certification section
 - i. The main certification question will specify that the certification should be “currently active”.
 - ii. The examples for the main certification item were changed to be relevant to the college graduate population.
 - iii. A question about the number of certifications was added.
 - b. Certificate section
 - i. The main certificate item now asks separately about three types of certificates: sub baccalaureate, post baccalaureate, and post masters.
 1. The group discussed the possibility of combining the last two items to save space because there may not be a meaningful analytical difference between these two types of certificates.
 - ii. The rest of the section only asks about the most recent certificate.
 1. The group discussed adding an item that would make it clearer which certificate respondents with multiple certificates were describing.
 - iii. There is interest in knowing which exact school people went to and whether it was a for-profit school, but the group decided it was too onerous to ask for school name in a mail survey and that respondents were unlikely to know whether the school they attended was for-profit
 1. The group discussed the possibility of dropping the item that asks which type of school awarded the certificate (community college, etc) because this was not likely to be analytically useful
3. NHES field study: the first screener mailing has been sent out.
4. Preparing for the 2015 full scale NHES
 - a. Concept interviews were completed in January to learn more about apprenticeships and other initial job training programs.
 - b. Cognitive interviews are currently taking place, with a focus on the certificate and apprenticeship sections.
 - i. The section that formerly focused on apprenticeships will be expanded to ask about several types of initial job training programs; respondents who have completed any of these types of programs will be asked to provide more details in a series of follow-up items.

- ii. Initial findings include:
 - 1. Some respondents continue to have trouble with skip instructions; as a result, the presentation of the skip arrows will be changed.
 - 2. Some respondents miss the instruction to “check all that apply”; as a result, these items will be switched to a list of yes/no items.
 - 3. Some respondents with only one certification have been confused by the item asking which certification is the most recent; as a result, this question will be reformatted.
 - 4. Some respondents have trouble differentiating between the various credentials and training experiences asked about in the survey.

- 5. NATES analysis
 - a. NATES was a response rate study to determine whether it was feasible to survey adults about their education and training.
 - b. A nonresponse bias study was conducted with a sample of the nonrespondents that used a shorter face-to-face survey. Census is analyzing the results of this study.
 - c. AIR will produce population estimates of the prevalence of these credentials, including some information about how these estimates vary by respondent characteristics. The analysis also will compare the NATES results to SIPP and prior ATES collections, and will discuss what these results mean for where we are in trying to measure these concepts.

- 6. Expert Panel
 - a. Two short meetings will be held in mid-March to discuss the certificate and apprenticeships sections.
 - b. A longer meeting will be held at the end of April to discuss
 - i. Any work the panelists have been doing with the SIPP data
 - ii. The results of the NRBS

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January 14, 2014

Present

Dori Allard (BLS), Sharon Boivin (NCES), Sarah Carroll (NCES), Sarah Crissey (NCES), Stephanie Cronen (AIR), Stephanie Ewert (Census), Harley Frazis (BLS), John Finamore (NSF), Lisa Hudson, (NCES), Bob Kominski (Census), Kirsten Manville (AIR), Shelly Martinez (OMB), Jordan Matsudaira (CEA), Rebecca Medway (AIR), Jon O’Bergh (OUS-ED), Matt Soldner (NCES), Celeste Stone (AIR)

1. Updates
 - a. The GEMEnA website has been updated.
 - b. GEMEnA now has an extranet site that can be used for sharing and editing files and for sending announcements to the group. The group should contact Kirsten with any questions.
 - c. NCES is preparing for a meeting of the expert panel, which is likely to occur in the next few months.
 - d. BLS is considering administering an Occupational Requirements Survey, which would be funded by the Social Security Administration. This would be an establishment survey that would determine what is required to work in particular occupations. The survey may include an item asking about certifications and licenses
 - e. The American National Standards Institute is attempting to establish standards for educational certificates.
2. SIPP nondegree credential data
 - a. The SIPP report on nondegree credentials will be released on January 16. These will be the first non-pilot national estimates coming out of GEMEnA’s development work.
 - b. The data files will be released at a later date.
3. NSCG item development
 - a. The NSCG cognitive interviews identified similar issues as those that have been identified by the ATES cognitive interviews (e.g., confusion over the definition of “certificate”, the need to note “currently active” for certifications and licenses)
 - b. NSCG recently held a meeting with data users to get their feedback on various topics, including the most important credential characteristics to ask about and the best way to ask survey questions on this topic.
 - c. The ATES items have been developed to apply to the full U.S. population; however, NSCG only surveys individuals with bachelor’s degrees. The group discussed the implications for item development for NSCG, noting that it was preferable for the main item used to determine overall prevalence of a credential to remain consistent across surveys but that there could be more flexibility in the characteristics collected in the follow-up questions.
4. NATES
 - a. Analysis of the NATES nonresponse bias study will begin soon.
5. ATES/NHES 2014 field test
 - a. The initial contact letters will be sent to sample members in late January.

- b. There will be two versions of the questionnaire: CWS (Credentials for Work Survey) will be a shorter version of the ATES questionnaire. If the CWS response rate is higher than the ATES response rate, NCES will likely alternate between the two shorter forms of the ATES in future years: CWS and TWS (Training for Working Survey).
 - c. The seeded sample will only receive CWS.
 - d. The feasibility study will only be administered in English. The first Spanish administration will take place in 2015.
6. Potential changes for ATES: 2015
- a. It has been a challenge to get respondents to match our intended definition of certificates. The group discussed the possibility of changing the certificate item to ask separately about three types of certificates – instead of having 1 overarching certificate question.
 - i. These questions would break certificates into those received for completing a work training program, those received from a high school vocational program, and those received from postsecondary institutions. Follow-up questions would only be asked of respondents noting a postsecondary certificate.
 - ii. This format will be tested in upcoming cognitive interviews.
 - b. The group discussed the possibility of expanding the apprenticeship section to also measure other types of formal on-the-job training (OTJT) programs, such as internships, externships, residencies, etc.
 - i. There are two reasons for doing this: (1) these types of programs are important for certain occupations in terms of marketability or being eligible for certification/licensure and (2) cognitive testing suggests that there may be overreporting of apprenticeships due to there not being another place in ATES for respondents to report these other types of OTJT programs.
 - ii. In preparation for this potential change 12 concept interviews were conducted with individuals who had completed such programs. Key findings from these interviews include: a wide range of terminology used by respondents to describe these programs (including coops, clinicals, field experience), a wide range of program lengths (from 200 hours to 5 years), and apprenticeships not being limited to blue collar occupations.
 - iii. Group members felt that there should not be a single item that asks about all types of OTJT programs; because of the wide range of programs, responses to such a question may be of limited analytical utility. There was interest in starting with a check-all item that would list several types of programs, and then only asking follow-up questions of respondents who indicated that they had completed an apprenticeship.
 - iv. The group also discussed whether this section should be combined with the “work-related training” section of ATES and decided that the two should remain separate. The survey instructions will need to make clear the difference between these two sections.

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Meeting Notes
December 15, 2013

Present

Dori Allard (BLS), Sarah Carroll (NCES), Sarah Crissey (NCES), Stephanie Cronen (AIR), Stephanie Ewert (Census), Harley Frazis (BLS), John Finamore (NSF), Lisa Hudson, (NCES), Bob Kominski (Census), Shelly Martinez (OMB), Jon O’Bergh (OUS-ED), Matt Soldner (NCES), Celeste Stone (AIR)

1. The group discussed the National Survey of College Graduates (NSCG) cognitive interview findings and the implications for NSCG item changes before the next round of interviews (February, 2014).
 - a. Based on feedback from both the NSCG and the ATES cognitive interview respondents that indicated confusion about whether the survey is referring to all certifications and licenses ever earned or only those which are currently active, the surveys will specify that we are only interested in certifications/licenses that are currently active.
 - b. Similarly, respondents expressed confusion as to whether some of the items about the relationship between certifications/licenses and employer or occupation refer to *any* employer/occupation the respondents have had, or should be limited to the *current* employer/occupation. The group decided to tie responses to a particular job, rather than an occupation. However, because respondents could have more than one job, we will need to be clear in surveys about which job respondents should report on. NSCG already has items on “primary job,” so the same approach can be used with the certification and license items.
 - c. Interview respondents also indicated that some items had unnecessarily wordy response options. Therefore, the group agreed that simple “yes/no” or briefer options could be used in place of options like “I got one or more certifications for work-related reasons.”
 - d. Some respondents noted that in some items they were asked whether a certification/license was “required” by an employer, whereas in others they were asked if it was “expected.” Responses differed based on the term used. The group discussed the goal of these questions, which is to identify when there is a “gatekeeper” to a job. For this reason, the group agreed the “required” is a better term to use.
 - e. Respondents continued to have difficulties understanding what we mean by educational certificate. This is a particularly unfamiliar credential for the Bachelor’s holders taking the NSCG survey. The Baccalaureate & Beyond (B&B) survey staff also have struggled with this, because respondents who have earned post-BA certificates (primarily teachers) do not know how to refer to them. B&B staff will share their current item wording with NSF and ATES staff. This item refers to the school they went to, which helps to prime respondents to think about college credentials.
 - f. The round 2 interviews will focus in-depth on the certificate measurement issues, particularly as they relate to post-BA certificates.
2. NCES proposed several key changes to the ATES 2014 Feasibility Study survey and asked for the group’s input.
 - a. In the certification/license grid, respondents were originally asked about the *last* time they earned *or renewed* it. However, asking when they *first earned* it may be more analytically meaningful. The group agreed, and this is the approach being taken by NSCG as well. Respondents do still need to indicate which certification/license they last earned, but this question needs to be offset from the grid somehow to make it more

- salient. This could be accomplished by putting a space between the grid and the last earned item.
- b. Similarly, for the section on the certification/license last earned, the words “or renewed” will be dropped. The proposed addition of “—that is, the one with the most recent year in question 5g” was not considered a good option, however, because multiple certifications and/or licenses could have been earned in the same year. For this reason, respondents will be instructed to report on the certification/license earned most recently for the first time.
 - c. The group agreed that the item on frequency of certification/license renewal could be deleted; instead, a simple yes/no item will be included to determine whether the credential has to be renewed.
 - d. The group also discussed whether to keep the follow-up item about respondent’s plans to renew the certification/license or let it expire. What we really want to know is why someone continues to maintain a certification/license vs. allows it to expire. The “useful” items elsewhere in the survey are probably sufficient for this purpose. The group did not feel strongly about keeping the plans to renew item.
3. The ATES 2015 cognitive testing plans were reviewed for the group.
 - a. The re-interview study was dropped in favor of doing additional concept and cognitive interviews that will begin in late December.
 - b. The concept interviews will be conducted with respondents who have completed on-the-job training programs such as apprenticeships and internships that were required for the respondents’ degrees, licenses or certifications, or jobs. The purpose is to understand these types of programs better and the language used to describe them, in order to inform our revisions to the section of the survey that previously focused on apprenticeships. That section has been revised to refer to on-the-job training programs more generally, due to suspected overreporting of apprenticeships by respondents who have participated in similar programs (e.g., internships, externships, student teaching, etc.).
 - c. The cognitive interviews will be conducted in two rounds, beginning in mid-January, and will focus on the certificates and new on-the-job training sections, respondents with lower levels of education, and Spanish-language testing.
 4. The White House has recently announced an initiative to collect data on occupational credentials. This initiative calls for the inclusion of items on certifications and licenses on surveys that collect data on education and employment.
 5. The SIPP findings on credentials should be released in January.
 6. The group’s next meeting will be January 14th.

Interagency Working Group on
Expanded Measures of Enrollment and Attainment (GEMEnA)
Meeting Notes
November 12, 2013

Present

Dori Allard (BLS), Stacey Bielick (AIR), Sarah Carroll (NCES), Sarah Crissey (NCES), Stephanie Cronen (AIR), Stephanie Ewert (Census), Harley Frazis (BLS), John Finamore (NSF), Dan Foley (NSF), Lisa Hudson, (NCES), Bob Kominski (Census), Kashka Kubzdela (NCES), Rebecca Medway (AIR), Jon O’Bergh (OUS-ED), Matt Soldner (NCES)

1. Updates
 - a. GEMEnA has a LinkedIn group.
 - b. The PIAAC results were just released; they include a certification item and other adult learning items.
2. The 2014 ATEES will be a two-phase mail survey in which households receive a screener that includes a household roster, and then a sample of eligible households receives a topical questionnaire. The study will include several experiments:
 - a. The screener will include a wording experiment for the age question. One version will ask for age in years and the other will ask for month and year of birth. Year and month of birth is more precise but may result in higher item nonresponse. Outcomes of interest include item nonresponse and the screener response rate.
 - b. The screener will include a prepaid incentive experiment in which some sample members receive \$5 and the rest are in a control group that does not receive a prepaid incentive. Outcomes of interest include the screener response rate.
 - c. The screener also will include an experiment in which some sample members receive a magnet and the rest are in a control group that does not receive one. Outcomes of interest include the screener and topical response rates.
 - d. ATEES will be part of the 2014 NHES feasibility study. There will be an experiment to determine the effect of sending more than one topical survey to households. Some households will receive the ATEES topical questionnaire, some will receive the other NHES topical (focused on children’s after school activities), and some will receive both. Outcomes of interest include the topical response rate and item nonresponse.
 - e. The ATEES topical will include a length experiment. Some sample members will receive the full ATEES questionnaire and the rest will receive a shorter questionnaire that includes a subset of the ATEES items that focuses on credentials for work. Outcomes of interest include the topical response rate and item nonresponse.
3. There are several things we hope to learn from the 2014 ATEES:
 - a. Whether or not it is feasible to send more than one topical questionnaire to a household
 - b. The effect of questionnaire length on the response rate
 - c. How well the certification and training grids function
 - d. How well the skip patterns function
 - e. How well the new/revised items function
4. The current schedule for the 2014 ATEES administration is as follows:
 - a. Late January: advance letter mailout
 - b. Early February: screener mailout starts

- c. Early March: topical mailout starts (topicals will be sent out in batches periodically throughout the field period)
 - d. Early August: end of data collection
 - e. ATEs 2014 also will include a reinterview study. The group will discuss this in greater detail at the next meeting.
5. ATEs also will be administered in 2015.
- a. We hope to receive preliminary data files during the 2014 data collection that can be used to prepare for the 2015 study.
 - b. The advance letters would be sent out in early January 2015. Planning for 2015 will need to start as soon as possible. The OMB package will need to be submitted several months before the data collection begins.
 - c. We will conduct cognitive testing of the ATEs questionnaire in 2014. The group will discuss this in greater detail at the next meeting.
6. The group discussed the status of including some of the key ATEs items on other, non-NCES federal surveys, such as the CPS (earliest possible fielding is 2015), ACS (earliest possible estimates in 2020), SIPP (first estimates in 2013-14, estimates from new panel in late 2014), and NSRCG (will be fielded in 2015).
- a. The suggestion was made to create a spreadsheet that would track the status of these efforts. It would note when the items would be administered and when the first estimates would be available from each survey.
 - b. The group discussed interest in including the items on longitudinal surveys. If a new panel of NLSY begins, this would be the ideal longitudinal survey to use.
7. The group got an update on the inclusion of GEMEnA items on SIPP and heard that data will be released in late 2013 or early 2014.

Interagency Working Group on
Expanded Measures of Enrollment and Attainment (GEMEnA)

No Meeting in October 2013

Interagency Working Group on
Expanded Measures of Enrollment and Attainment (GEMEnA)
Meeting Notes
September 10, 2013

Present

Dori Allard (BLS), Stacey Bielick (AIR), Sharon Boivin (NCES), Stephanie Cronen (AIR), Stephanie Ewert (Census), Harley Frazis (BLS), Dan Foley (NSF), Lisa Hudson, (NCES), Bob Kominski (Census), Kashka Kubzdela (NCES), Rebecca Medway (AIR), Jon O’Bergh (OUS-ED), Celeste Stone (AIR), Andrew Zukerberg (NCES)

1. Updates
 - a. The NCES reorganization is effective as of Sunday.
 - b. A presentation about GEMEnA’s work will be made to ICSP this week.
2. ATES II cognitive testing is complete. Thirty interviews were conducted over five weeks. Four versions of the questionnaire were tested. Key insights from the cognitive interviews include:
 - a. The original questionnaire had many skips. As a result of the interviews, skips were reduced wherever possible and skip instructions were made more explicit throughout the questionnaire.
 - b. Though respondents typically did not have problems filling out the grids, they tended to have negative reactions to the grids when they first saw them. As grids are the easiest way to collect information for people who have multiple credentials or training experiences, two of the three grids will remain in the survey – but efforts have been made to simplify them.
 - i. The grids will ask about three credentials/trainings instead of five. The number of questions in the grids has been reduced. The grids are reformatted so that each row represents a question and each column represents a credential/training. Finally, the certificate grid was removed from the questionnaire.
 - c. Several of the original items were deemed wordy. As a result, the wording of many items was simplified and the number of words was reduced whenever possible.
 - d. The number of topics covered in the survey made it cognitively burdensome for some respondents.
 - i. The group discussed the possibility of having two versions of the ATES questionnaire. One would focus on participation and the other would focus on attainment. This would make the questionnaires shorter, reduce respondent cognitive burden, and hopefully increase the response rate.
 - ii. Both versions would have the same core items, with rotating modules, focusing either on attainment or participation, added for each version. Topics of modules that are not included in a certain version would be represented by a few key items on that topic. This would allow analysts to look at the relationship between participation and attainment.
 - e. The initial items asking respondents whether or not they have a certificate is problematic – respondents are interpreting it in varied ways. It may be necessary to increase the item text to improve understanding.
 - f. Some participants had problems with the item asking about “basic, reading, writing, or math classes”. There were varied interpretations of “basic”. Some participants included college classes. The group discussed the possibility of focusing just on reading and literacy courses here – perhaps saying something like “literacy classes to improve basic reading skills”.

- g. The group discussed the possibility of dropping particular items in an effort to shorten the questionnaire.
- 3. ATEs II will include a split panel experiment in which two version of the questionnaire will be tested.
 - a. The group discussed different options for the experiment and settled on comparing a longer version of the questionnaire that includes all of the original topics to a shorter attainment-focused version. This shorter version will still include key participation items so that analysts can look at the relationship between attainment and participation.
- 4. The group discussed early NATES results related to certifications and licenses.
 - a. Generally, these results were quite similar to what was seen for ATEs.
 - b. Certification bin factors include: work-related, passing a test or exam to get the credential, and being able to use it to get a job with any employer in the field. Similar percentages of respondents who said they had a certification or license reported these characteristics in ATEs and NATES.
- 5. The group got an update on the inclusion of GEMEnA items on SIPP and heard that data will be released by the end of the year.

Interagency Working Group on
Expanded Measures of Enrollment and Attainment (GEMEnA)
Meeting Notes
August 13, 2013

Present

Dori Allard (BLS), Stacey Bielick (AIR), Stephanie Cronen (AIR), Stephanie Ewert (Census), Harley Frazis (BLS), John Finamore (NSF), Dan Foley (NSF), Lisa Hudson, (NCES), Bob Kominski (Census), Rebecca Medway (AIR), Celeste Stone (AIR)

1. ATES II cognitive interviews update
 - a. Interviews are taking place throughout August. GEMEnA members are invited to observe.
2. NATES write-in responses
 - a. Several NATES items included an “other” option where respondents could write in a response. The group discussed ways that these responses could be used to determine whether response options should be modified for ATES II.
 - b. Who issued the certification or license
 - i. Several respondents listed a specific school; this suggests these people may have had certificates instead of certifications/licenses. Text could be added to the initial certification/license item indicating that certificates should not be listed here.
 - ii. Some respondents wrote in “military”. This potentially could be added as an example of a government organization.
 - iii. Consider adding “religious organization” as an example under the professional or trade organization response option.
 - c. Reason for getting the certification or license
 - i. “Getting a promotion” could be changed to “advance in your job” to be closer to the write-in wording.
 - ii. “Keeping you marketable” will be clarified to be “keeping you marketable to employers.”
 - iii. Several people wrote in “license requirements”; this is not a worry for ATES II now that this question is presented differently.
 - d. Preparation for obtaining certification or license
 - i. Write-in responses were either very specific (name of a particular course) or very broad (“going to college”).
 - ii. Consider changing the question to: “Which of the following prepared you for this certification or license?”
 - iii. Add a response option: “I got a college degree or other credential”
 - e. Instruction to maintain certification or license
 - i. The group discussed whether or not to include certifications or licenses that have expired. It was decided that expired certifications are not of interest. The initial certification/license item could be modified to say “currently active” or instructions potentially could be added that say “don’t include certifications or licenses that have expired”. Some members supported the idea of adding an item about whether or not the respondent intends to let their certification expire.
 - f. Certification/license validity check
 - i. The group discussed whether to add back in the item about whether or not the respondent had to take a test to get their certification.

- g. Type of school awarding certificate
 - i. Over half of write-ins seem to not be schools; these respondents may be reporting about certifications.
 - h. Apprenticeship field
 - i. Most write-ins are not from the top 10 list of registered apprenticeships. Some of these may be apprenticeships that aren't registered; others may not actually be apprenticeships.
 - ii. The group discussed the possibility of adding new items to ATES II that would ask about typical characteristics of apprenticeships that could be used as validity checks on response to initial apprenticeship item.
 - i. Types of training
 - i. Several of the write-ins were training that was completed for personal interest. The ATES II question will indicate that only work-related training is of interest.
 - j. Why took training
 - i. Certification requirements and state requirements should be combined into one response option moving forward.
3. Initial NATES results
- a. ATES I and NATES credential rates will be compared – but nonresponse adjustments have not yet been completed for NATES, so detailed discussion will occur later.
 - b. The branch items seem to be functioning well, but some follow-up items had higher than desired item nonresponse rates.
 - i. One driver of the item missing rate seems to be cases that look complete at first glance but actually are not sufficiently complete for analysis purposes. The group discussed the need to define what constitutes a “complete case” for this survey.
 - ii. Another driver may be that some people misunderstand the skip instructions. For example, some respondents who said “yes” to the initial certification item skipped the follow-up item. This issue compounds itself with the additional skips within this section.
 - iii. Skip errors appear to be correlated with educational attainment. Less educated respondents were more likely to make mistakes and their questionnaires were more likely to be insufficiently complete for analysis.
 - c. The group discussed several options for minimizing skip errors in ATES II.
 - i. ATES II should have fewer skips and simplified skip logic whenever possible.
 - ii. Different colors could be used for each section of the questionnaire.
 - iii. Items that have skips could have navigation instructions for all response options (not just the option that requires skipping ahead). For example, there could be a down arrow to the left of the non-skip response options that points the respondent to the next item in the questionnaire.
 - iv. Eventually ATES may have a Web option where skip logic would be programmed into the instrument.
 - v. One group member suggested asking about credentials in the screener and then sending only applicable sections of the questionnaire to each sample member.
 - vi. To reduce cognitive burden, instructions could be differentiated from main item text with font style and spacing.
4. Overview of plans for ATES II administration
- a. This will be part of an NHES feasibility test. The test also will include ASPA, which asks parents to report on one of their children's after school activities. It is more economical to include ATES with ASPA. This also increases the eligibility rate for the screener.

- b. The screener will ask about household composition, including age, gender, and enrollment status. There will be a Web response option.
- c. Sample members for the ATEs questionnaire will be sampled from the household screener responses. As part of an experiment, an adult, a child, or both will be sampled from each household.
- d. The screener will include an experiment that asks either for (1) age in years or (2) month and year of birth. Date of birth is more accurate for sampling purposes but also more sensitive, so it may lead to greater item nonresponse. The group discussed the possibility of including both items – ACS does this.
- e. There will be an incentive experiment.
 - i. Some sample members will receive a magnet.
 - ii. Some sample members will receive \$5.
 - iii. Some sample members will not receive any incentive.
- f. Up to four mailings of the main questionnaire will be sent to the household.
- g. There will be two versions of the ATEs questionnaire to allow for testing different versions of items, etc.
- h. The study will include a seeded sample of known certification, license, and certificate holders.

Interagency Working Group on
Expanded Measures of Enrollment and Attainment (GEMEnA)
Meeting Notes
July 9, 2013

Present

Dori Allard (BLS), Sharon Boivin (NCES), Sarah Carroll (NCES), Sarah Crissey (NCES), Stephanie Cronen (AIR), Stephanie Ewert (Census), Harley Frazis (BLS), Lisa Hudson, (NCES), Bob Kominski (Census), Kashka Kubzdela (NCES), Shelly Martinez (OMB), Rebecca Medway (AIR), Matthew Soldner (NCES), Rachel Zinn (OMB), Andrew Zukerberg (NCES)

1. Updates: OECD released a report on postsecondary vocational training.
 - a. One of the chapters focuses on the importance of anchoring credentials to the needs of industry. The report notes that this is inadequately measured right now and that efforts attempting to measure this should continue, citing the ATES pilot study as an example.
2. NATES 2 pilot instrument review
 - a. The educational attainment section has not changed. It uses the ACS educational attainment question.
 - b. There have been several changes to the certification and licensure section.
 - i. The group discussed how specific the initial certification/license item should be.
 1. The question noted that respondents should only report certifications/licenses that they got for work-related reasons. The group suggested to not do this in the initial question, and instead to ask whether the certification was work-related in a follow-up question.
 2. The question notes that respondents should not report “business licenses”. There was concern that the term “business license” would be confusing for some respondents, so the group suggested adding examples of business licenses to the question text.
 - ii. The group discussed whether to focus on the most recent certification or the most important one.
 1. If focusing on the most important one, instructions should be included to define “most important”.
 2. One member noted that “important” is not useful for analysts looking to determine the effect of certifications on other outcomes because the definition is dependent on a positive outcome.
 3. The group decided it is best to focus on the most recent certificate. The survey could ask which certification was most important for work as well.
 - iii. The group discussed the possibility of adding a question about the year the certification first was obtained to the grid in question 6.
 - iv. Question 8 asks about continuing education requirements because these are expected to be predictive of labor market value. One group member suggested moving these to the grid if there is room.
 - v. There were concerns that question 9, which asks about time required to earn the certification, would be too hard for respondents to answer.
 - c. There also have been several changes to the certificate section.
 - i. This intention of this section is to focus on sub-baccalaureate certificates. Post-BA certificates are much rarer (only 2% of certificates); so the wording of items

in this section should be optimized for sub-BA certificates. Also, post-BA certificates can be measured in B&B.

- ii. However, it may be difficult to ask respondents to exclude post-BA certificates. The group suggested keeping the questions broader so that post-BA is not excluded, and then to include a question in the grid that asks whether the certificate is post-BA.
3. The group agreed to reconvene on Thursday afternoon by telephone to finish reviewing the questionnaire.

Interagency Working Group on
Expanded Measures of Enrollment and Attainment (GEMEnA)
Meeting Minutes
June 11, 2013

Present

Dori Allard (BLS), Stacey Bielick (AIR), Sharon Boivin (NCES), Sarah Crissey (NCES), Stephanie Cronen (AIR), Stephanie Ewert (Census), Harley Frazis (BLS), Lisa Hudson, (NCES), Bob Kominski (Census), Jon O’Bergh (OUS-ED), Matthew Soldner (NCES), Andrew Zukerberg (NCES)

1. Focus group discussion
 - a. Participants reported different roles and values of training
 - i. Within each occupational group, participants felt that some training was useful (e.g., makes them more marketable) and some was not useful but was required (e.g., “compliance” training).
 - ii. Across occupational groups, participants in some occupations did not find training useful or supported by their employers, while participants in other occupations felt that training was both useful and necessary.
 - b. There is no simple way to describe or categorize training
 - i. Training varies widely in type, form, content, and length.
 - ii. Focusing on the most recent training is not a good option, due to the large number of “compliance” trainings and other trainings that participants did not feel was as important for their jobs as other trainings.
 - iii. Duration of training is not necessarily related to quality. Some short trainings were seen as valuable by participants, so shorter trainings should not be excluded.
 - iv. Participants seemed to be able to report who provided their training—an outside company or a staff member, a professional trainer or person working in their field.
 - v. Participants also reported a lot of web-based training, and were also allowed to do some training for employers while at home.
 - vi. In general, among the occupational groups participating, we did not see educational institutions playing a large role in the training reported.
 - vii. Some participants reported getting some type of “credit” for providing training to their colleagues; we will need to word our items to exclude giving rather than participating in training.
 - viii. On-the-job training was interpreted differently by various participants; this wording would be problematic to use in survey items.
 - c. Participants could respond to questions about the cost of their trainings accurately.
 - d. We will need to survey self-employed respondents separately from other respondents in the section of the NATES where we ask about employers’ role in providing or supporting training.
 - e. Our focus should be more on the amount of training someone participates in during a year, not on single events. Participants were able to report the numbers of trainings they engaged in during the previous year. However, at the same time we need a way of

identifying the more valuable trainings, and the role of choice in trainings. For example, we may be able to differentiate between compliance trainings and trainings taken by choice, and compare the value of those types of trainings.

- f. We need to narrow down our research questions and use those to decide what we really need to measure, e.g., how does formal job training contribute to the development of human capital that allows people to hold a job or move up in a job. Simple descriptive information like amount of training by demographic characteristics and by field would also have policy value.
2. NATES II pilot study updates
 - a. NATES II cognitive interviews will take place in August.
 - b. The OMB clearance package for the pilot study will be submitted by the end of September.
 - c. The NHES will ask parents about postsecondary plans for their children, such as what information they have about college costs. Therefore, we may also include these types of items on the NATES II for respondents who are out-of-school youth.
 - i. These items may be useful for anyone who does not have a college degree.
 - ii. There is no longitudinal follow-up, which limits the items' utility; however, we can relate these data to what we see from HSLS, which does provide longitudinal data.
 - iii. We can also ask respondents if they got a GED/equivalency in the past, and how long after high school they received it.
 3. Seeded sample
 - a. Ideally, we will include seeded certificate samples from some for-profit institutions.
 - b. We should check in with some local institutions as well.
 - c. We are looking for a wider range of providers in general, including more than one state.
 - d. The range of years should be limited—this requires further discussion.
 - e. We need to keep in mind that the seeded sample does not receive the screener; the survey FAQs will need to be updated for this group of respondents.
 4. Outreach updates
 - a. NCES presented to the Data Quality campaign last week—this group is interested in our work to establish a common vocabulary.
 - b. NCES is also talking to certifying bodies like ANSI and NOCTI.
 - c. The ICSP presentation has been moved to September.
 - d. OVAE has scheduled a meeting in November to bring together federal agencies interested in measuring certifications and licenses. The purpose is to build interest and help agencies create uniform language around occupational credentials.

Interagency Working Group on
Expanded Measures of Enrollment and Attainment (GEMEnA)
Meeting Minutes
May 14, 2013

Present

Dori Allard (BLS), Stacey Bielick (AIR), Sharon Boivin (NCES), Stephanie Cronen (AIR), Stephanie Ewert (Census), John Finamore (NSF), Harley Frazis (BLS), Lisa Hudson, (NCES), Bob Kominski (Census), Rebecca Medway (AIR), Matthew Soldner (NCES), Rachel Zinn (OMB), Andrew Zukerberg (NCES)

1. Updates

- a. Participation in work-related training and education: focus groups
 - i. We have OMB clearance.
 - ii. Will take place in late May.
 - iii. Recruitment is going smoothly.
- b. IPEDS has a new director.
- c. NATES
 - i. Field is closed for main part of study.
 - ii. Nonresponse bias study is currently taking place. Interviewers will go door-to-door to ask nonrespondents a few key questions to determine their characteristics.
 - iii. The next field test will take place in January 2014. This will test the feasibility of combining NATES with NHES and will include some experiments. Would like to assess the feasibility of getting two mail interviews in a single household (both child and adult).
 - iv. Full-scale NATES and NHES will take place in 2015.

2. Coding certification/license verbatims (NATES)

- a. We will start to get these responses from Census in the next few weeks.
- b. Using ATES responses as a starting point for thinking about how to code the NATES responses.
- c. The initial assumption was that certifications link to specific occupations and that we could link to SOC. It is possible to match most cases to the high level codes (ex: “nurses”), but certifications do not always link to occupations. For example, a certification in advanced cardiac life support could be used in several occupations. Also, people in many fields have PMP certifications.
- d. There was discussion of how specific the codes should be (“healthcare support” vs. “healthcare”)
- e. One member mentioned that even if we didn’t use SOC and made up our own codes, we would still end up with ~10% that we cannot code to a specific occupational category.
- f. Another member suggested coding to SOC and adding a new “other” category.
- g. Another member suggested using SOC and adding a category called “can’t classify”. We also would have a second variable that had codes for these certifications. There was support for this suggestion.

- h. It is important that coders assign codes without seeing the respondent's reported occupation.
3. Outreach updates
- a. Presented at AERA conference. Next year, we should consider presenting at AAPOR and adult education/labor conferences.
 - b. Presented at OVAE. This resulted in a promising conversation for a potential source of the seeded sample for NATES.
 - c. Will be meeting with expert panel members and giving presentations. Expert panel members also encouraged to make presentations themselves.
 - d. Interagency committee on statistical policy is meeting next month. Members are encouraged to attend.
 - e. Plan to make presentations to education-focused foundations.

Interagency Working Group on
Expanded Measures of Enrollment and Attainment (GEMEnA)
Meeting Minutes
April 9, 2013

Present

Dori Allard (BLS), Stacey Bielick (AIR), Sharon Boivin (NCES), Sarah Crissey (NCES), Stephanie Cronen (AIR), Stephanie Ewert (Census), John Finamore (NSF), Dan Foley (NSF), Harley Frazis (BLS), Lisa Hudson, (NCES), Bob Kominski (Census), Shelly Martinez (OMB), Rebecca Medway (AIR), Jon O’Bergh (OUS-ED), Matthew Soldner (NCES)

1. Updates

- a. Strand 1 (certifications and licenses)
 - i. The ATES pilot study report has been released and posted online.
 1. The executive summary will be sent to group members.
 - ii. The results will be presented to the Interagency Council on Statistical Policy – GEMEnA members should decide by the May meeting if they would like to attend, so they can be added to the list.
 - iii. The results have also been presented at IPEDS state data conference.
- b. The GEMEnA website has been updated.
- c. NATES – operations for the mail survey are complete. Nonresponse follow-up will start soon.
- d. Members should brainstorm ideas for spreading the word about the ATES pilot study.
 - i. One member suggested we look for an opportunity to brief OVAIE – to share our definitions of “license”, etc. so that there will be coordination between NCES and OVAE.
 1. They are planning to start with a group of people interested in focusing on credentialing.
 - ii. Another member suggested we brief key foundations (Gates, Lumina, etc.).

2. Addition of certification/license/certificate items to NSCG

- a. The purpose of adding these items is to be able to determine the effect of these credentials on respondents’ pathways.
- b. The NATES items were used as a template.
- c. At a previous meeting, members had suggested reordering the NSCG to better incorporate the new items. There was not sufficient time to reorder the questionnaire before the content evaluation in May (reordering would require reprogramming of skip patterns), so the new items were added without changing the order of the existing items.
 - i. There will be another evaluation next year, and there should be an opportunity to reorder/streamline the questionnaire at this point.
- d. As part of the content evaluation, cognitive interviews will be conducted in each mode. There may be an opportunity for GEMEnA members to attend.
- e. NCSES would like feedback on:
 - i. Where they placed the new items within the questionnaire

- ii. The small changes in wording that they made (compared to NATES). These changes were made because NSCG respondents likely got any credentials they have *after* completing a bachelor's degree.
- f. Certification license items
- i. Placement in questionnaire: Members agreed that these items should not be in the same place as the educational attainment items because they are work credentials. They liked that they come right after the questions about jobs.
 - ii. Wording: Members generally approve of the adaptation of the NATES items. A few suggestions were raised:
 - 1. In the section title, "licensure" should be changed to "license".
 - 2. A39 (main certification/license item): "Do not include small business license" should be added to the instructions in light of the findings from the SIPP test. However, this will make the instructions really long and there is some concern that respondents will skip it. Two suggestions were proposed:
 - a. Remove some of the existing examples.
 - b. Put this instruction on a separate line, perhaps even with a blank space before it.
 - 3. A40 (got credential for work-related reasons): It is better to leave the verb in this item as "obtain" or "got" – it should not be changed to "earn". It is best to use plain language whenever possible.
 - 4. A43-44: Members did not have a problem with the decision to move the questions about the name of the credential before the questions about why the person got the credential (this is more consistent with the order of other NSCG sections).
 - 5. A44 (what kind of work did you get the credential for): Need to make sure coding lists for these items are standardized across collections so that everyone is using the same dictionary.
 - a. NCES plans to create a coding scheme based on the ATES responses to this item that is linkable to SOC.
 - b. There are currently no plans to do something like this with responses to the ATES item equivalent to A43 (name of credential). It might be possible to use ETA's certification finder – could enter respondents' answers and see what comes out. Hopefully this could eventually be used to autocode Web responses.
 - 6. A45 (reason for getting credential): Members agreed with the decision to change the response options to be more similar to the options in other NSCG items. However, "facilitate" may be too fancy of a word.
 - a. Option "to start my own business" might be problematic considering the findings of the SIPP test. It will probably be fine if respondents have already been told not to include small business licenses; however, it is something to consider.

7. A47 (is the credential for the job you have now): This item seems confusing – there is concern people will think the item literally refers to the current job, when it really means the current line of work. This should be tested in the cog lab. It was also suggested to compare responses to those provided in A44/45.
 8. A48 (whether employer paid any of the costs): Members were in favor of the addition of this item.
 9. There was discussion of whether people can easily differentiate between having a license to operate a business and being certified to do that work of that business (ex: having a license to operate a yoga studio vs. being certified to teach yoga). This is particularly an issue for sole proprietorships, where a person is both the boss and the employee.
 - a. NSCG will try to recruit small business owners to the cog labs and will make sure to probe on this issue.
- g. Certificate items
- i. Placement: The items come after educational attainment/financial support and before current enrollment.
 1. People might get funding for certificates too, so may want to move funding items after the certificate items. The wording of the funding items also would have to be changed because they only refer to degrees. This is not something that could be changed right now, but it is something to consider next time. These items were first asked in 2013, so there is not much concern about breaking a time series.
 2. Some people might mention their certificates in D11 under “other”. They might be frustrated if they have to re-enter it in the certificates section again (D14). One suggestion was to note in D11 that questions about certificates are coming later in the section.
 - ii. Suggestions related to the wording of particular items
 1. D14 (have certificate): Revise introduction – change “rather than” to “in addition to”. Use the cog lab to make the introduction more appropriate for this population (have bachelor’s degrees).
 2. D15 (got certificate for work-related reasons): suggestion to remove this item or ask it at the end of this sequence. In its current placement, some people will say they did not get it for work and will be skipped out of the sequence. Then we won’t know any details about their certification – at this point, we want to know as much as possible about certificates.
 3. D16 (year got most recent certificate): Take out “work-related” and just ask about most recent certificate throughout this section.
 - a. Should look at whether NPSAS gets at work-related vs. personal reasons for getting certificates.
 4. D17 (type of school that awarded most recent certificate): This item seems problematic – can people differentiate between the response options? However, we do want to know if people say they are getting their certificates from random institutes in the “other” text box. Perhaps the response options could be changed to be more like A15.

3. Strand 3 focus group moderator's guide: work-related training and education
 - a. The purpose of these focus groups is to develop items to add to NATES.
 - b. The current wording of the question that tries to get participants to list their work-related education and training experiences likely will elicit formal training. Consider probing about informal training to find out more about how people differentiate between formal and informal training.
 - c. The guide refers to "work-related training". We also want to know about education, so this should be changed to "work-related education and training".
 - i. However, we do not want participants to talk about degrees. Add a note in the introduction telling participants that we do not want to focus on their degrees today.
 - d. At this point, we want to elicit as many experiences from participants as possible. In later groups, we can consider being more specific/narrow.
 - e. The question about what skills people learned is potentially troublesome. We do not want people to go into very detailed accounts of specific skills they learned. This item will be changed to ask about "types of training", and a note will be added asking the moderator to keep the discussion at a higher level.
 - f. There is some concern that the guide is too long to be able cover all of the material in 90 minutes.
 - g. We want to know who is providing the training – is the employer doing it without community college involvement or is there at least some community college involvement?
 - h. Asking people whether the skills they learned will be useful in future jobs may not be very reliable as a way to judge the quality of the training.
 - i. We want to make sure the moderator is clear on the types of education and training we are interested in so that he/she can bring people back on task when they start talking about irrelevant things. If we notice patterns to the relevant or irrelevant things that are mentioned, we can incorporate this into the questionnaire.
 - j. We really want to know whether the training is related to skill development for work. This could be somewhat difficult to tell during the focus groups because particular training will be relevant for some jobs and not for others (ex: Xerox training would be relevant for an administrative job, but not particularly so for other jobs).
 - k. "Trainings" should be singular.
 - l. We are interested in how any training experiences people have had. However, at this point, it is difficult to get at this because we do not know exactly what we want to include as work-related training. This will likely have to wait.

Interagency Working Group on
Expanded Measures of Enrollment and Attainment (GEMEnA)
Meeting Minutes
March 12, 2013

Present

Dori Allard (BLS), Stacey Bielick (AIR), Sharon Boivin (NCES), Sarah Crissey (NCES), Stephanie Ewert (Census), Harley Frazis (BLS), Lisa Hudson, (NCES), Chinhui Juhn (CEA), Rebecca Medway (AIR), Jon O'Bergh (OUS-ED), Matthew Soldner (NCES), Andrew Zukerberg (NCES)

1. Updates
 - a. Strand 1 (certifications and licenses)
 - i. ATES pilot study report has been approved and should be released soon
 1. Outlines the process and provides recommendations
 2. Look for opportunities to talk about what we have been doing – news flash, briefings, etc
 - ii. Have been meeting with expert panel members to get their recommendations
 - iii. Developing an action plan for deploying the items
 1. What are the research questions we could answer by putting these items on various vehicles
 - b. Strand 4 (NATES)
 - i. Still in the field
 - ii. Nonresponse bias study plan is in development
 - c. Sequestration means that we will delay the January pilot test and possibly do more development work such as cognitive interviews
 - d. Website in process of being updated
 - e. Encourage members to think about presenting this work at next year's FCSM
2. Work-related training: focus group recruitment criteria
 - a. DC is a very highly educated area – to be more representative, consider conducting some of the focus groups elsewhere (perhaps Baltimore)
 - b. Have participated in training in past 2 years
 - i. Actual survey will likely only measure past 12 months, but focus groups will use longer reference period in order to (1) make recruiting more feasible and (2) explore how people remember/discuss training that has happened a bit further in the past
 - c. Part of active work force (no retirees, no homemakers) – group agreed with this
 - d. Whether or not to include unemployed people
 - i. We might want to ask them different questions than we ask employed people
 - ii. Could be useful to talk to them because they might be more motivated to seek training to procure a job
 - iii. Not sure if there would be enough unemployed respondents to the survey to be able to focus on them in later analyses
 - iv. It also could be difficult to recruit enough of them for focus groups

- v. Have to consider that there might be tension in conversations between employed and unemployed – definitely do not want to have just one unemployed person in a group
 - 1. Could include unemployed people in initial groups and reassess after we see how smoothly they go
- vi. If we decide to have a separate group for unemployed people, it would likely need to have a broader occupational focus than the other groups
- vii. One option is to exclude unemployed people from the focus groups and just do cognitive interviews with them
- e. Each group would focus on a set of occupations
 - i. The certification focus groups focused on sub-baccalaureate level occupations because this is where we thought there were the most open questions
 - ii. The new groups include a broader range of education levels while still focusing more heavily on sub-baccalaureate
 - iii. Consider having a group that includes managers to get more higher-education participants; managers also seem to get a lot of training
 - iv. Consider removing janitors because not sure how much training they really get
 - v. Consider whether there will be a difference between public/private school teachers
 - vi. Consider excluding federal government workers – they likely get more training than other people and are not representative of the broader population; since there are so many in the DC area we would likely end up with some in the focus groups
 - vii. Otherwise, group is pleased with proposed occupation mix
- f. Education
 - i. Higher educated people are more likely to have work-related training
 - ii. Training is more meaningful for people with less education in terms of their ability to make an impact in the economy
 - iii. There do seem to be more open questions for the sub-baccalaureate level
 - 1. We will keep the focus on sub-baccalaureate level but not exclusively
 - iv. Want to learn how people are getting the education/training they need to participate in the work force and earn a living wage
 - v. We do not want any participants who are currently full-time students.
- g. Occupational experience
 - i. Reduce minimum experience from one year to 6 months
 - ii. Range of occupational experience in each group
 - 1. One benefit is that more recent starters could trigger the memory of more experienced workers
- h. Age
 - i. Max age=55, minimum age for some college or less=21, minimum age for Associate's or more=25
 - ii. Might be interesting to learn about older people getting training to stay in the work force because they have been aged out of their job – however, they would

likely use similar lingo to discuss this training so it will probably be fine to exclude them.

- iii. For the cognitive interviews we could expand the age range to 16-65.
 - i. Need to adjust potential recruitment questions based on this conversation
3. Reengineered SIPP field test
- a. Included license/certification questions
 - b. Field reps understood distinction between license/certification and generally seemed to do fine administering the items
 - c. One issue that arose – small business owners consider themselves as having a license (license to operate a business) – consider adding something to address this in item instructions

Interagency Working Group on
Expanded Measures of Enrollment and Attainment (GEMEnA)
Meeting Minutes
February 12, 2013

Present

Dori Allard (BLS), Stacey Bielick (AIR) Sharon Boivin (NCES), Sarah Crissey (NCES), Stephanie Cronen (AIR), Stephanie Ewert (Census), John Finamore (NSF), Dan Foley (NSF), Harley Frazis (BLS), Beethika Kahn (NSF), Bob Kominski (Census), Rebecca Medway (AIR), Shelly Martinez (OMB), Jon O'Bergh (OUS-ED), Emilda Rivers (NSF), Rachel Zinn (OMB), Andrew Zukerberg (NCES)

1. Updates
 - a. Strand 1(certifications and licenses)
 - i. At this time, there are 4 recommended items.
 - ii. An action plan is in development. The next step is to review federal surveys that go to households/individuals to determine which are candidates for inclusion of these items. GEMEnA will prioritize, expert panel members will be asked to provide input on the list, and contacts at agencies will be approached.
 - iii. A recommendation was made to come up with a pitch for introducing these items and make a presentation to target audience, perhaps at ICSP meeting.
 - iv. There is a list of 10 surveys that are highly sought out for item inclusion; we should consult this list as part of the review process.
 - b. Strand 2 (educational certificates) and 3 (participation in education and training)
 - i. Strand 2 focus groups are complete.
 - ii. Strand 3 focus groups will start soon. Potential research questions will be discussed at today's meeting.
 - iii. The results of these 2 focus group efforts will be used to develop items for cognitive interviews and a pilot test.
 - iv. The pilot test will include a seeded sample and reliability test. It will also include the certification and license items to provide additional data on those items.
 - c. Strand 4 (NATES)
 - i. The study is in the field through April.
2. National Survey of College Graduates (NSCG) – discussion on use of certification/licenses items in future waves
 - a. NCSES is in the midst of evaluating NSCG content with the aims of making it more useful for policy decisions and allowing users to track pathways.
 - b. Census has also been asked to review the survey.
 - c. This survey focuses on individuals who have a bachelor's degree in science/engineering. It is switching to a rotating panel design; 2013 is the first follow-up.
 - d. Decisions for the 2015 collection will need to be made by May 2014.
 - e. The survey included 2 license/certification items in 2010.
 - i. Whether respondent took work-related training in past 12 months for licensure/certification
 - ii. Whether respondent took college courses for licensure/certification
 - f. The survey does not currently define certification/license. Web/mail respondents must answer based on their own understanding of the terms (phone respondents are read a scripted definition if they request it).

- g. Tables were shared showing responses to the certification/license questions in the 2010 NSCG. Comparisons were made between these estimates and similar estimates from ATEs – however, it was noted that the two surveys have different target populations.
 - h. There are two goals for adding certification/licensure items to this survey:
 - i. Determining how many people have certifications/licenses (based on an agreed-upon definition).
 - ii. Understanding the effect that having a certification/license has on people's pathway and their decision making processes.
 - iii. The current items have an enrollment focus and do not address these goals.
 - i. The group discussed how to go about adding new items to the survey.
 - i. There was a suggestion to restructure the order of the questions: start by asking whether the person has a certification/license and then ask how the person went about getting it. It could be problematic to ask about certifications/licenses within a section about the respondent's primary job because the respondent might not report certifications/licenses they are getting in order to move to another job in the future.
 - ii. There was discussion of how to phase between enrollment and attainment items. Some suggested putting these types of items in separate sections of the questionnaire. If NSCG collected information independently about certificates, degrees, and certifications/licenses, these items still could be cross-classified after the fact to determine which respondents have multiple credentials and determine the returns on each.
 - iii. The group agreed that items on certifications and licenses should come before those asking about certificates.
 - iv. One possibility is to add the certification and license items between items D8 and D9 and make connections to respondents' occupations.
 - v. These changes would require a break in the time series.
 - vi. Structuring the interviews similarly to the NCVS. The first wave would be a bounding interview (asking about certifications/licenses since last bachelor's degree) and the subsequent waves would ask if respondents had gotten any certifications/licenses since the last interview.
 - j. There was a discussion of online vs. in-person courses: whether respondents see these two types of courses as having the same meaning, whether respondents report online courses in typical education questions. Whether there is a difference in return on investment for online vs. in-person courses was identified as an open question that deserves further research. However, it may be premature to address this issue in the current survey.
 - k. It was also noted that most of the items on distance learning are outdated and need to be revised.
3. Proposed research questions and recruitment plans for Strand 3 focus groups
- a. The purpose of these items is to measure training that has job-related value.
 - b. The group discussed the possibility of keeping one or two of the focus groups very broad to generally see what type of training people are taking part in. This approach would not be used for all six groups.
 - c. The group also discussed the appropriate flow for the focus group discussions.
 - i. Some recommended starting broadly by asking respondents to tell us about all of the training they have done and then to get more specific.
 - ii. Others suggested asking respondents about their "experiences" instead of referring to specific things, such as "courses."

- iii. The suggestion also was raised to start by asking about specific examples of training, and finally to ask respondents if there were any other types of training they wanted to report that had not been covered.
- d. The group discussed whether to limit the discussion to formal training or to include informal training as well.
 - i. Most training that takes place is informal, so it would be useful to know more about this type of training. However, it is more difficult to measure informal training. So it may be better to focus on formal training.
 - ii. As a compromise, the groups could also ask about “in between” types of training that are slightly less formal. For example, mentoring is a key influence on job/career outcomes in postsecondary settings.
 - iii. The purpose of the items is less about capturing everything that people have done and more about making sure that the items elicit accurate responses on specific topics.
 - iv. At least some of the groups should focus on people who say they have formal on-the-job training to see what words respondents use to describe this construct.
 - v. It would be useful for the focus groups to determine (1) what people consider to be formal training and (2) the words people use to differentiate between formal and informal training.
- e. There was discussion of the appropriate reference period.
 - i. The ideal reference period for survey items would be the past 12 months.
 - ii. For focus groups, it might be useful to ask about a longer period, perhaps up to 7 or 8 years. Or the groups could mostly focus on the past 12 months, but also separately ask about key experiences prior to that time to identify additional types of training that could be used as examples within response options.
- f. The discussion also touched on the features that make respondents more likely to recall certain types of training.
 - i. More recent training may be more salient to respondents.
 - ii. Two key features determine whether a type of training is important:
 - a) If it is required by the employer
 - b) If it is substantively important (e.g., learning a new analytical technique)
 - iii. Another feature is whether or not the respondent thinks the training will be useful for his or her job (or a future job if the respondent is currently seeking employment). But if the training occurred recently, the respondent may not know yet.
 - iv. Others raised the point that we also want to know about training that respondents felt was not important or not useful.
- g. It could be useful to have one of the groups target people who are currently searching for work.
- h. One possibility is to contact NATES respondents who reported certain types of training, such as apprenticeships, to try to recruit them for the focus groups.

Interagency Working Group on
Expanded Measures of Enrollment and Attainment (GEMEnA)

No Meeting in January 2013

Interagency Working Group on
Expanded Measures of Enrollment and Attainment (GEMEnA)
Meeting Minutes
December 11, 2012

Present

Dori Allard (BLS), Stacey Bielick (AIR) Sharon Boivin (NCES), Sarah Crissey (NCES), Stephanie Cronen (AIR), Stephanie Ewert (Census), Dan Foley (NSF), Harley Frazis (BLS), Lisa Hudson (NCES), Bob Kominski (Census), Kashka Kubdzela (NCES), Shelly Martinez (OMB), Jon O'Bergh (OUS-ED), Rachel Zinn (OMB), Andrew Zukerberg (NCES)

1. Updates

- a. New member, Rachel Zinn, from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB)
- b. NATES
 - i. To provide a valid test of the screener against the NHES screener, additional households will be sampled to respond to the NHES screener only.
 - a) This will expand the supplemental screener sample.
 - b) The NATES screener rosters adults and children (up to 10 people) compared to the NHES screener which rosters only children (up to 5 children); there are no other differences in the screeners, except wording changes to reflect the inclusion of adults in the NATES screener.
 - ii. The questionnaire has been revised.
 - a) Instructions for the certificates items have been moved to the beginning of the series.
 - b) Now using the ACS foreign-born items.
 - c) There were 6–8 other minor changes.
 - iii. Census will be coding industry/occupation, but NCES contractors will postcode the certificate fields; the group will revisit the taxonomy used for the ATEES to see if it requires any changes.
- c. ATEES report
 - i. The report may be in its final round of review.
 - ii. Next step is to produce the 508 version, and release in early 2013.
- d. Strand 2 and 3 focus groups, cognitive interviews, and pilot study
 - i. The final focus group report on certificates will be sent to the group before the next meeting.
 - ii. Focus groups will be conducted on enrollment topics in spring 2013.
 - iii. After completing focus groups on enrollment topics, items will be drafted and tested in cognitive interviews along with items on certificates.
 - iv. Revised items on enrollment and certificates will then be pilot tested in early 2014.
 - v. The next pilot test will include more diverse seeded samples of certificate and certification/license holders.
 - vi. It will also include reliability testing (e.g., test-retest) to provide additional information on item performance.

2. Priority enrollment-related questions

- a. As a starting point on the item development work, the priority questions identified by the expert panel were organized by the following measurement topics:
 - i. Whether the item had to do with education, training, or work experience
 - ii. Whether the item had to do with:

- a) How skills are acquired
 - b) How skills are documented
 - c) Who provides skill acquisition
 - d) Purpose, value, or role of skill acquisition (utility)
 - e) Mode of instruction
 - f) Time and money spent (duration and costs)
 - g) Skills targeted (content)
 - h) Skill acquisition planning and strategy
- b. The group agreed that the latter topics are more useful, but that topics and items need to be prioritized.
- i. Topics 1 through 3 are more important than 4 through 8, although costs (f) and utility (d) are also important for answering the question of where we should put our money.
 - ii. Other topics raised by the group follow:
 - a) Mentoring and guidance in the process of acquiring skills
 - 1) This may be too fine grained, but it could be included in the focus groups.
 - 2) It might be possible to ask about mentors at work.
 - b) Prerequisites (e.g., basic literacy skills) for obtaining higher level skills or credentials
 - 1) On-the-job training can be a prerequisite for obtaining a credential; there is not a clear line between enrollment and attainment.
 - 2) The group will have to decide what all segments of the scope and sequence it can study.
- c. These topics could also be organized as who, what, when, why, where questions.
- i. Asking focus group participants “how” they got where they are will also inform the other questions so that not all need to be asked (with the possible exception of “why”).
 - ii. The “why” is a utility question; it is about seeing the links between what people do and what they expect to happen.
 - a) We usually infer the reasons why people participate in education and training or get a credential; we assume they do it to have the skills to be employed and get a good wage.
- d. Some terms need to be operationalized; for example, what is meant by skill? How general or specific is it? What do we mean by enrollment?
- e. What should be the timeframe for these questions? Should it include future plans?
- i. Recent past (past year) and current timeframe.
 - ii. But if the biggest influence on getting a job now is experience gained from a recent job, what is important is the education, training, and attainment that helped someone get his or her past job.
 - iii. This is an important point, but then we would be trying to measure pathways in a nonexperimental context.
 - iv. Trying to get data from earlier periods would create recall issues, especially for shorter term trainings.
 - v. Instead of asking future plans, could ask respondents—especially younger respondents—what skills and credentials they do not have that they would want (or think would “add value”).
 - a) Younger respondents might not know, however, what would “add value.”

- b) Questions like this that are more relevant to younger respondents could be included in longitudinal studies instead.
 - f. The group will not change existing basic items on attainment and enrollment; new enrollment items will be focused on other types of enrollment (e.g., noncredit).
 - i. The attainment measurement categories/buckets include:
 - a) Traditional/existing measure that does not include certificates or certifications/licenses—this measure will not change
 - b) Certificate measures
 - c) Certification and license measures
 - ii. The enrollment measurement categories/buckets include:
 - a) Traditional/existing measures of schooling
 - b) Other measures that include noncredit education and training as well as on-the-job training
 - g. We will need to think about the context (e.g., job-related) questions that will also be included in any survey that uses the new items; the item sets could get long, so there will need to be some prioritizing for federal surveys with space restrictions.
3. The next meeting will be held on January 8.

Interagency Working Group on
Expanded Measures of Enrollment and Attainment (GEMEnA)
Meeting Minutes
November 13, 2012

Present

Dori Allard (BLS), Sharon Boivin (NCES), Sarah Crissey (NCES), Stephanie Cronen (AIR), Stephanie Ewert (Census), Harley Frazis (BLS), Lisa Hudson (NCES), Chinhui Juhn (CEA), Bob Kominski (Census), Kashka Kubdzela (NCES; by phone), Shelly Martinez (OMB), Jon O’Bergh (OUS-ED), Matthew Soldner (NCES)

1. Discussions of the expert panel
 - a. The goal was to get expert input on what is important to measure.
 - b. Now GEMEnA will consider which recommended constructs are not yet being measured and are feasible to measure on federal surveys.
 - c. Constructs that keep coming up include:
 - i. Length of time/level of effort to get credential
 - ii. Which credentials are “most important” for respondents’ jobs
 - a) If a survey cannot collect information on all certifications, etc., the most recent is probably the best proxy for “most important.”
 - iii. Who provided the education, training, and credentials
 - iv. The idea of portfolios of credentials, stackable credentials, pathways, etc.
 - d. Discussions with the panel will be ongoing in order to turn their recommendations into something workable.
 - e. The expert panel raised the possibility of linking with State Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) and making data available for program accountability purposes.
 - i. At this stage our contribution will be to connect with other offices (e.g., HHS, NRSA) to encourage others to use one language and set of definitions for collecting this type of information.
 - ii. Having these types of data can help provide context for program accountability.
 - f. Certification and license items should continue to be examined as they are rolled out into other survey contexts.
 - i. Data from more diverse seeded samples will be collected and analyzed.
 - ii. Items will undergo additional nonresponse bias with a sample of low-literate adults.
 - iii. There may also be additional reliability testing of items (test-retest).
 - g. The option of having a “mark all that apply” educational attainment items was discussed.
 - i. It may or may not have analytic value; it does not form a true hierarchy for all people, and some go back to get additional (lower-tier) credentials later.
 - ii. There may have been an experiment on this at Census a while ago.
 - iii. We could test different options in cognitive interviews.
2. Priorities for item development and data collection
 - a. There are limits to what we can do; our purpose is to develop federal survey items.
 - b. We should focus on high-priority constructs that we know we can measure well first.
 - c. Some suggestions of the expert panel are less feasible than others; for example, we do not collect data on programs for accountability purposes, and we might not be able to measure pathways.

- d. However, using our items might allow programs to conduct analyses for their own purposes (e.g., is professional development or other routes to getting a license more effective?).
 - e. Therefore, we should continue to pursue our original purpose—developing items for federal surveys—but also hear from others on what they need to know.
3. Alignment of enrollment vs. attainment
- a. Enrollment does not equal attainment; participation in education and training does not always lead to a credential (e.g., noncredit coursetaking, employer-provided training).
 - i. We need to figure out how to capture the difference between participation for noncredential reasons vs. attempts to attain a credential (successful or unsuccessful).
 - b. Enrollment is complex, but we will need to develop some simplistic items or we risk people not identifying with what is being measured (e.g., how do we ask if someone “finished” what they were participating in?).
 - c. What all do we care about?
 - i. Fill holes in BPS—human capital development that is noncredit.
 - ii. Find out if people have “finished,” “completed,” “met goal,” etc. in focus group testing and figure out how to ask on a survey.
 - iii. What we want to know is what respondents did to get where they ended up and what were their goals.
 - iv. We may be able to ask how they got the skills they have now and what they expect to get from having them.
 - v. We can compare people in different age groups to see what they are doing and getting from noncredit activity.
4. Next steps
- a. Working with the expert panel to get input on the surveys to include the certification and license items on
 - b. Synthesizing the panel’s input on important enrollment constructs
 - c. Pulling together enrollment items from other surveys
 - d. Moving forward on NATES collection

Interagency Working Group on Expanded Measures of
Enrollment and Attainment (GEMEnA)
Meeting Minutes
October 9, 2012

Present [attendees are not available]

1. Updates
 - a. NATES was approved by OMB and is with Census.
 - b. Focus groups are under way with the final groups October 9 (construction, manufacturing, transportation) and October 23 (health). Initial group was with cosmetologists on September 18.
2. Enrollment discussion
 - a. Group asked to provide feedback on the following:
 - i. Does the organizational framework work?
 - ii. Did we miss any literature?
 - iii. Researcher language vs. people language for survey questions.
 - b. “Different buckets” were discussed.
 - i. Which are priority and what are we missing?
 - ii. Noncredit education is important in order to learn about training that takes place outside of postsecondary institutions; although this may be outside of DOE funding scope, it is within scope of the group whose priority is to help inform policymakers with data that will help people get training.
 - iii. Noncredit enrollment is not recorded in administrative data in most states. We know very little about this.
 - c. The enrollment paper prepared by AIR presents the following buckets:
 - i. Community college non-credit education –
 - a) For employers
 - b) ESL/ABE
 - ii. Work-related job training (formal on-the-job training)
 - a) Employer provided training contracted out
 - b) Apprenticeships
 - d. Lens focus was discussed.
 - i. One suggested focus, amongst several to capture these things, might be following the federal funding streams, grant money, etc. It was agreed that just one direction may not capture the full amount of what is out there.
 - ii. Question was asked about things that are not occupationally relevant (e.g., ballroom dancing example). How do we draw the circle around these?
 - iii. Possible questions as the following lenses:
 - a) How did you get the skills for your current job?
 - b) What other non-work skills did you get?
 - c) What skills are you trying to acquire now for possible future careers?
 - e. Overlap with ETA was discussed.
 - i. Survey may not be correct vehicle for use of this training beyond “current job” and requested NCES reach out to ETA to be part of this group. Concern about overlap with their work. Those research questions were more appropriate for a longitudinal study.
 - ii. Would perhaps like to get an inventory of federal funds going to job training programs, like veterans programs, and perhaps get in touch with those groups.

- f. Economic outcomes were raised.
 - i. Use a cross-sectional study to get a sense of “stock” what people are doing, but also focus on a few important things, like non-credit. The longitudinal study is something that could be considered later to address further research questions.
- g. Final discussion was held on what to capture.
 - i. We know we will not get all fish in the sea – how will we know what we missed? We will take a similar approach to the earlier pilot test development work in that it will be iterative. We will use qualitative development work like focus groups and cognitive research. We will pilot test questions and we will acknowledge that it is not comprehensive and be open to improving and adding questions in the future.
 - ii. We need to get maximum yield but also accurate yield for our investment (that is, in the 20 minutes we have with a respondent). We want to get fewer fish of the right kind, but not too few that we miss important fish.
 - iii. Need enrollment bin factors and these should be driven by research questions which were summarized as what other *workforce development* activities are you doing? “What is the metric” that measures workforce development (get a job, get a different job, advance in job?). In one word, it is about *work*.
 - iv. What if it is not work-related but then leads to a job years later? Consensus response was, we can’t go there.
- 3. Expert Panel meeting focus was discussed.
 - a. What are the research and policy questions?
 - b. What are possibly important subgroups?
 - c. What is feasible in a federal household sample survey?
 - d. Help us think about what is really meaningful. We don’t need to start from zero.
 - e. We are also looking at the “portfolio” of education and training and what was most valuable. How do we know what was valuable if we don’t know what wasn’t valuable?

Interagency Working Group on Expanded Measures of
Enrollment and Attainment (GEMEnA)
Meeting Minutes
September 11, 2012

Present

Dori Allard (BLS), Sharon Boivin (NCES), Sarah Crissey (NCES), Stephanie Cronen (AIR), Stephanie Ewert (Census), Dan Foley (NSF), Harley Frazis (BLS), Lisa Hudson (NCES), Bob Kominski (Census), Kashka Kubdzela (NCES), Shelly Martinez (OMB), Jon O’Bergh (OUS-ED), Isaiah O’Rear (NCES), Matthew Soldner (NCES), Andrew Zukerberg (NCES)

1. Name of group
 - a. The name of the group has been changed to the Interagency Working Group on Expanded Measures of Enrollment and Attainment (GEMEnA) to reflect the full scope of its work.
2. Introduction of new member from CEA—Chinhui Juhn—who will be joining us in future meetings
3. Upcoming activity
 - a. Focus groups
 - b. NATES field test
 - c. Additional developmental work on certificates
 - d. Early-stage developmental work on participation measures
4. Expert panel meeting on November 1
 - a. Three main purposes:
 - i. Help us with certifications work; inform us on the kinds of data they (the panelists) need on certifications so that we can identify high-priority items and determine on which surveys to include items.
 - ii. Help us think through the development of participation measures.
 - iii. Help us build demand for these data and make the data collections a priority.
 - b. First meeting will therefore focus on
 - i. how panelists would use the certifications items, and what other data they would need to answer policy questions; and
 - ii. priming the pump on the participation questions; what issues are the most important from a policy perspective.
5. ATEES report
 - a. The next draft will be resubmitted to IES soon
6. Cognitive interview results and feedback on the revised NATES survey
 - a. There were 14 interviews conducted.
 - b. Overall, results indicate that the NATES is in good shape.
 - i. Respondents reported that they would fill it out if it came in the mail.
 - ii. Respondents reported that they found the survey interesting and not too difficult.
 - iii. The certification items tested well.
 - c. Respondent feedback that led to revisions:
 - i. Certifications are “issued” and a certificate could be from a “vocational” school.
 - ii. Online instruction needs to be asked about more explicitly.

- iii. Some of the skips were missed (those using brackets) and need to be made more obvious.
 - iv. Lists of items with Y/N response options resulted in some respondents only checking “yes” responses.
 - a) A “mark all that apply” approach is one option to consider, although the literature shows that you get more distribution in responses with the existing Y/N format.
 - v. Certificate item 21 led to some confusion of subBA vs. postBA certificates.
 - a) This needs to be simplified or dropped.
 - vi. Several people wanted to include internships under apprenticeships; not enough feedback was received to determine whether this was for credit or noncredit.
 - a) Apprentices are a small population, but important for policy and more common in some occupations; items 32 and 35 will probably help weed out nonapprentices.
 - vii. Other instruction and training section is long.
 - a) Think about capturing CEU’s already referred to in item 11.
 - b) Use bullets or separate work/not work for item 47.
 - viii. Full-time/part-time items are awkward for people with multiple p/t jobs.
 - a) An option is to replace with ACS employment item, which would allow us to make comparisons with other Census data; we may also want to replace language items with items from ACS.
 - ix. Additional feedback and suggestions from GEMEnA:
 - a) Certificate items do not tell us which certificates are the most important or how many the respondent has total.
 - b) Could ask 21 about most recent certificate only, but people might still misinterpret and get skipped out—keep them in and compare response with highest attainment.
 - c) Asking about most recent certificate might not get the most important certificate, but it is likely to be most salient and relevant to job.
7. Focus group protocol feedback
- a. Training section
 - i. Level of effort needs more emphasis in this section; this is a key area of the development work.
 - ii. Probe more explicitly on whether the courses were taken as part of a formal program of study that leads to a credential.
 - b. Job requirements section
 - i. Probe on whether the skills learned while obtaining the qualifications are relevant to the respondent’s job.
 - ii. Do not limit to “required” when asking about other training, qualifications, preparation, etc. that are good to have in respondent’s field.
 - iii. Probe more about how many qualifications have been obtained, and which one has been the most important.
 - iv. Probe more explicitly on participation in certificate programs in order to prepare for certification or licensing exams.

Interagency Working Group on
Expanded Measures of Enrollment and Attainment (GEMEnA)

No Meeting in August 2012

Interagency Working Group on Certificates and Certifications
Meeting Minutes
July 10, 2012

Present

Stacey Bielick (AIR; by video), Sharon Boivin (NCES), Stephanie Cronen (AIR), Stephanie Ewert (Census), Dan Foley (NSF), Harley Frazis (BLS), Lisa Hudson (NCES), Bob Kominski (Census)

1. Name of the group
 - a. Name should be changed to reflect the full scope of the group's work.
 - b. Options were proposed and discussion ensued.
 - c. We will think about the name and then talk about it again during the August meeting.
2. Formation of an expert panel to provide additional guidance for existing and planned work
 - a. The panel will advise on certifications, certificates, and the future work on enrollment and participation (e.g., in noncredit-bearing education and training).
 - b. We will provide members with brief background documents and make their charge clear.
 - c. The group will meet in the fall of 2012.
3. The ATES pilot study report
 - a. The report has finished NCES review.
 - b. It will not be released until after IES review and approval.
4. Additional dissemination activities
 - a. The group will plan additional dissemination activities for its work, such as presentations and reports (e.g., a Census report based on credential items from SIPP).
5. Review of the certificates focus group plan
 - a. Three separate focus groups will be held with participants in the following fields: (1) cosmetology; (2) manufacturing, construction, repair, and transportation; and (3) health sciences.
 - b. These fields represent the majority of certificate holders, and are fairly diverse across and within each group.
 - c. Participants will be recruited locally, and will include 8-10 people.
6. NATES response rate test updates
 - a. The first mailout is now planned for January 2013, to avoid holidays and to allow for further testing of items and survey design.
 - b. Cognitive interviews will be conducted this fall to test items and the multiple respondent survey format.
 - c. NATES administration will also include a subsample of households for a substudy of the effect of using an NHES-style household enumeration screener that includes adults on screener response rates.
 - d. NATES will also include a nonresponse study, which will utilize a matrix-style version of the survey that is administered in an in-person interview format.
7. Review and discussion of the NATES draft survey
 - a. The general attainment items will be moved to the front, following by the certificate and certification items.
 - b. The group agreed that a certificate option should not be included in the general attainment items if we have additional items on certificates.

- c. The order of items 5–8 should be changed to something like 7, 8, 6, 5.
 - d. Simplify some of the colored sections of the survey so that only one cognitive task is required per section. Also work on item flow.
 - e. The group also agreed that the list of certification and certificate fields will be too difficult for respondents to use accurately; instead, we should allow respondents to provide a verbatim response for the type of work the credential is for, and code the responses. We will still use the taxonomy we developed for the analysis of certificates and certifications.
 - f. The benefits/reasons items may have lower utility value than other items; we should consider the utility vs. burden trade off for these items. Think about what is most important: What do you have, what did you do to get it, what are you doing now, and how is education/training helping you? We want to make sure respondents complete the full survey. If we do keep these items, we need to make them consistent across sections.
 - g. For the subbaccalaureate certificates screener item (#18), we need to figure out how to avoid screening out those with both subbaccalaureate certificates and degrees.
 - h. The length of time included in item 24 is a good starting point. The group was less sure about the time referent in item 51, so it should be tested. The issue is that relevant short term classes can add up, but do not last 8 hours individually.
 - i. After item 39, we should ask about other apprenticeships they may have.
 - j. The background items can be cut down somewhat; the disability items can either be removed or simplified.
 - k. The desirability of including informal on-the-job items was also discussed, with the group deciding that these items are too different from our current work and will not be included for now. They will be investigated further during the enrollment and participation development work.
 - l. The next step is to revise the survey and send back out to the group for review. We plan to get the revised version back to the IWG by Friday July 20. Comments will be needed within a one week (by Friday July 27) to meet our schedule for OMB review.
 - m. We will send the revised matrix version of the NATES nonresponse survey at the same time with the same review deadline.
8. The next meeting will be held on August 14.
 - a. For the next meeting, please read the Ganzglass paper on nonprofit and be prepared to begin talking about the boundaries of our new work on participation in education and training outside the formal credit-bearing postsecondary education system.

Interagency Working Group on Certificates and Certifications
Meeting Minutes
June 12, 2012

Present

Dori Allard (BLS), Allison Bell (NCES), Stacey Bielick (AIR; by video), Sharon Boivin (NCES), Sarah Crissey (NCES), Stephanie Cronen (AIR), Stephanie Ewert (Census), Dan Foley (NSF), Harley Frazis (BLS), Lisa Hudson (NCES), Bob Kominski (Census), Kashka Kubdzela (NCES; by phone), Shelly Martinez (OMB), Christina Murphy (AIR), Jon O’Bergh (OUS-ED), Isaiah O’Rear (NCES), Matthew Soldner (NCES), Andrew Zukerberg (NCES; by phone)

1. Review and discussion of certification/license field taxonomy
 - a. The goal is to have as simple a list as possible, while still capturing the heterogeneity of certifications/licenses and obtaining valid data. In particular, it is important to capture heterogeneity as it relates to differences in the labor market value of these credentials. To this end, we may want to include more detailed categories for subbaccalaureate certification/license fields.
 - b. The proposed categories are similar to those currently used by SIPP.
 - c. Two issues identified include the similarity between certain categories (e.g., health occupation subcategories) and the low frequency of many of the proposed categories.
 - d. If the survey is administered by web, respondents could use a coder rather than having to select from a list, which would be more accurate and would capture the heterogeneity.
 - e. High return/low frequency certifications will be difficult to predict, especially those that grow over time. For this reason, we will need to include a write-in option, and consider adding categories to the taxonomy over time.
 - f. The taxonomy could be tested by using ATES data to analyze the relationships between the fields and education, income, and other factors for which field should be a discriminatory factor. It can also be tested on the NATES and during cognitive testing planned for later this year.
2. Update on NATES
 - a. NATES will send 3 surveys to each household and ask to have all (up to 3) adults respond. The median number of adults per household is expected to be 1.7.
 - b. The survey will have color-coded sections for certifications/licenses vs. certificates to help avoid respondent confusion between the credential types.
 - c. Part of the NATES testing effort will also include sending out a screener to a small sample of households not included in the main pilot for full household enumeration, to evaluate the effect on screener response rates if NATES is administered as part of NHES in the future.
3. Presentation on newly released certificates report
 - a. The report used data from several federal sources to describe certificate holders, returns on investment, and sources of certificates.
 - b. In the future, items developed as part of ATES and related initiatives will allow for much more in-depth analysis and reporting on certificates and their value. Currently, the data are limited. Ideally, future data collections will also include longitudinal studies to look at changes in types of credentials held throughout adulthood.
 - c. Issues worth noting include the nonlinear nature of certificate attainment (many people get an associate’s degree first, then go back for a certificate), the multiple purposes of certificates (early training, stepping stone to postsecondary, later retraining). Reasons for

underreporting certificates may be due to the life stage the respondent was at when the certificate was earned vs. where he or she is now.

- d. Major findings were that gender and field matter. Women get a smaller bump in income from a certificate, but women are concentrated in particular fields. Therefore, the gender effect may be driven by field. In addition, working in-field vs. out-of-field made a 30 percent difference in income, underscoring the importance of certificate field. These gender and in-field effects represent some of the big issues involved in doing research on certificates.
 - e. Some states have longitudinal data systems that allow for analysis of certificates' labor market value. These states might be interested in having their data explored or doing so themselves.
 - f. Also, in the future, items on certificates can be linked to adults' skills through the PIAAC assessment.
 - g. It is also possible to gauge the labor market value of certificates by analyzing job postings on the internet.
4. Review and discussion of certificates focus group plan
- a. Important factors to consider during certificates focus groups, in light of the new certificates findings, include gender, life stage, and order/field of credentials obtained.
 - b. Fields to target include cosmetology, information technology, business management, health, and mechanics.
 - c. To represent the various stages that certificate holders are at, we do not want to limit to relatively young participants; recency of certificate is more important than age.
 - d. It would not be useful to include people who do not have a certificate.
 - e. We should aim for getting a somewhat heterogeneous sample (i.e., not all from the same college), but can probably find enough variation within the DC metropolitan area. We do want to focus on a small number of fields, however, or it will be difficult to identify patterns among the responses.
 - f. Snowballing probably would not provide enough heterogeneity. Getting lists of certificate earners from community colleges for the last 5 to 10 years might be more effective.
 - g. We could also include certificate program instructors, although they might use different language than their students.
 - h. Some respondents will have received a certificate, but then failed to get a job or pass their certifying/licensing exams (i.e., those certificates have lower labor market value). An analysis of ATEs data can provide us with a list of the most common fields in which respondents are likely to hold both a certificate and a certification/license. Recruiters can then target those fields.
 - i. Given the small sample sizes of the focus groups, however, it may not be possible to identify people who obtained a certificate but did not pass a qualifying exam, and it may not be possible to investigate all the issues we identify.
 - j. To balance depth vs. breadth, we may want some groups that represent single fields, and others that are more diverse (e.g., health, cosmetology, etc., and a mixed fields group).
 - k. Also try to find certificate holders that do and do not also hold a certification or license. Particularly for certificate holders in the health field.
5. The next meeting will be held on July 10.

Interagency Working Group on Certificates and Certifications
Meeting Minutes
May 8, 2012

Present

Dori Allard (BLS), Allison Bell (NCES), Stacey Bielick (AIR; by video), Sharon Boivin (NCES), Stephanie Cronen (AIR), Stephanie Ewert (Census), Dan Foley (NSF), Harley Frazis (BLS), Lisa Hudson (NCES), Bob Kominski (Census; by phone), Kashka Kubdzela (NCES), Shelly Martinez (OMB), Christina Murphy (AIR), Isaiah O'Rear (NCES), Andrew Zukerberg (NCES)

1. Introduction of new members
2. Distribution of a spreadsheet containing certificate and certification (C&C) items being included on federal surveys (as of May 2012)
 - a. The spreadsheet will be a starting point for researching the possibility of adding C&C items on other federal surveys.
3. Discussion of CPS supplement
 - a. Clarification is needed from the group on the final questions to be included.
 - i. Basic certificates/certifications
 - ii. Source of award (company, school, etc.)
 - iii. Whether it was a requirement for a specific job
 - iv. Award field
 - a) This item is problematic; what coding methodology and taxonomy should be used?
 - b. Options for distribution of the supplement are still being discussed.
 - i. March or October supplement
 - ii. Stand-alone, one-time supplement (May or July; preferably May)
 - a) May be possible to fit these items into the schedule for 2013 or 2014, although 2013 would be tight
4. Update on ATEs technical report
 - a. The report will go back into technical review very soon.
 - b. The report is expected to be posted online.
5. Update on NATES pilot collection
 - a. The interagency agreement is being finalized.
 - b. The collection will begin this fall or winter.
 - c. Topics have not yet been specified beyond training to prepare for work.
 - d. Primary purpose is to test response rates for this mode (mail survey).
 - e. Another goal is to start testing enrollment items.
 - i. There have been issues in how regular and nonregular schooling (i.e., enrollment) has been measured in the past.
 - ii. A preliminary scan of the literature on how people are using enrollment data will be conducted and commonly used items on regular/nonregular schooling will be compiled for the next IWG meeting.

- f. A nonresponse bias analysis will also be conducted that involves face-to-face interviews with nonrespondents.
 - g. The group discussed the possibility of avoiding an initial screener in order to avoid two sets of response rate issues. NCES will look into this possibility and share information on the methodology of similar pilots with the group.
 - h. The method of delivery of NATES was discussed under the uncertainty that it would be tied to NHES for all administrations. The possibility of tying it to PIAAC was discussed (a computer-assisted in-person data collection), along with continuing NATES during the off-cycle years of PIAAC.
6. Updates on IPEDS work
- a. The National Postsecondary Education Cooperative (NPEC) convened a working group on definitions used by IPEDS, with the end goal of standardizing definitions and instructions provided to institutions. The working group investigated the following questions:
 - i. How comparable are certificates/certifications reported?
 - ii. Which types are not reported?
 - iii. How have they changed over the years?
 - iv. Do definitions align with other surveys?
 - v. What can be done to improve data quality?
 - b. The group spoke with 9 institutions and found that respondents generally understood the existing IPEDS instructions and definitions, although some data oddities remain unresolved (e.g., certificates awarded in history or English). How to best measure time to credential attainment is also still being explored. A report on the findings is expected to be released this fall.
 - c. The group discussed the need to be able to distinguish between sub-baccalaureate C&Cs, post-master's C&Cs, and academic or occupational C&Cs.
7. Review of findings from existing sources of data on C&Cs
- a. There is no perfect source of information on C&Cs; for example, IPEDS underestimates the number of for-profit students and completers (most of whom are certificate recipients) because of its focus on Title IV institutions.
 - b. The group discussed responses related to C&Cs on the CPS, which does not have an option for C&Cs. Preliminary data indicates that some assumed certificate recipients check "some college" as their highest educational attainment, while others check "high school."
 - c. The need for larger sample sizes was discussed; the next BPS collection (in 2014) will include a much larger sample to capture more C&C-seekers.
 - d. Other measurement issues were also discussed, such as the variation between federal surveys that collect C&C information. A "best practice" for asking students about C&Cs effectively does not currently exist.
 - e. The challenge now is in building a set of items that allows us to measure true certificates and identify those that have market value.
8. Conclusions on existing sources of C&C data
- a. Caution must be exercised when interpreting current C&C data due to small sample sizes and the lack of clear separation between survey items.
 - b. Certification/license items should not be added to the educational attainment time, but rather exist as independent items. The challenge will be creating a question set that allows for credential attainment along with usefulness/outcomes.

- c. In the future, federal surveys need to become more effective and consistent across the board to assess C&C information.
 - d. The two main problems for collection of accurate C&C information are determining the source (business, college, etc.) and the time until attainment.
9. Brainstorming on focus group topics for certificates
- a. Questions that may be incorporated into further development of certificates-related items follow:
 - i. Where did you get the certificate?
 - ii. Where do you list the certificate on your resume?
 - iii. How long did it take you to complete the certificate?
 - iv. Why did you seek this certificate? What benefit(s) did you expect?
 - v. If you already had a degree (associate's, bachelor's, master's), why did you go back for a certificate?
 - vi. Was this certificate required for a profession?
 - vii. Who provided the instruction for the certificate and who awarded it?
 - viii. Were there online components to your certificate?
 - ix. Do you feel the certificate was useful? Has it helped your career?
 - b. Who should be included in focus groups? Possibilities include respondents with these characteristics:
 - i. High school or some college as highest educational attainment
 - ii. A profession in one of the four most common certificate fields
 - iii. A variety of reasons for pursuing a certificate
 - iv. Diversity in locale (e.g., East Coast, West Coast)
 - v. Diversity in types of educational institutions attended
 - vi. Perhaps a post-bachelor's certificate
10. The next meeting will be held on June 12.

Interagency Working Group on
Certificates and Certifications Meeting Minutes
April 10, 2012

Present

Dori Allard (BLS), Stacey Bielick (AIR; by video), Sharon Boivin (NCES), Stephanie Cronen (AIR), Stephanie Ewert (Census), Dan Foley (NSF), Harley Frazis (BLS), Lisa Hudson (NCES), Bob Kominski (Census), Kashka Kubdzela (NCES), Shelly Martinez (OMB), Jon O'Bergh (OUS-ED)

1. CPS Supplement
 - a. Items recommended by the group may be added to either the March or October CPS Supplement, including these:
 - i. The main certification/license item
 - ii. Who awarded/issued the certification/license
 - iii. Whether certification/license is required for job
 - iv. Field of certification/license
 - b. BLS will discuss the options with Census; NCES will follow up.
 - c. This addition is not likely to require a testing protocol; we may just need to develop a timeline.
2. NATES pilot updates
 - a. IAA is in process and should wrap up in two or three months.
 - b. Data collection will begin in September, to give us time for additional item development.
 - c. This schedule will not leave much time for qualitative testing, but the primary purpose of the NATES pilot is to test the response rates that we can get using a mail modality; we will continue to develop and test items for future administrations.
3. Enrollment item development
 - a. NCES has commissioned a literature review of studies using federal statistical data on enrollment in work-related education and training; this includes participation in education and training that does *not* lead to a credential (e.g., noncredit courses, on-the-job training), unlike the ATES pilot study.
 - b. This work will also include an inventory of existing federal survey items.
 - c. An expert panel will be held to determine their interest in a survey that includes these types of items.
4. Conference presentations
 - a. NCES presented a paper at the Federal Committee Statistical Methodology Research Conference in January (2012) that summarizes the work and future plans of the group; the paper is available at http://www.fcsm.gov/12papers/Boivin_2012FCSM_VII-B.pdf.
5. Certificates item development
 - a. Based on the ATES pilot, further testing is required for the certificates items.
 - b. The problem may not be the items themselves, but rather with the seeded sample used in ATES.
 - c. We will test both possibilities in our future development work, which will include focus groups, cognitive interviews, and a pilot survey with a much expanded seeded sample with improved geographic diversity.
 - d. We will also talk to some of the providers to get their input.
 - e. We can also learn from the work of the IPEDS team at NCES.

- i. IPEDS collects data from all Title IV postsecondary institutions.
 - ii. Recently, certificates have been a focus for IPEDS; IPEDS has formed a working group to learn more about how certificates are being defined and counted.
 - iii. Their work to find out how institutions define certificates will help us come up with a clearer definition for our own work.
 - iv. NCES will share information learned by the group so far in next month's meeting.
 - v. This group will need to think more about the types of certificates we want to measure (e.g., less-than-one-year certificates? Post-baccalaureate certificates? Certificates outside of occupational areas?). If we do not want to measure these types of certificates, we need to develop items that will help us exclude them.
 - vi. We might want to do some research into the types of certificates that seem to have labor market value; search resumes online that frequently mention certificates of specific types—a similar approach has been used in the work at Georgetown's Center on Education and the Workforce.
6. The next meeting will be held on May 8.

GEMEnA Meeting Notes: December 2009 through September 2014

Interagency Working Group on Certificates and Certifications
Meeting Minutes

No Meeting or Notes Unavailable in November 2011 – March 2012

Interagency Working Group on Certificates and Certifications
Meeting Minutes
October 18, 2011

Present

Stacey Bielick (AIR), Sharon Boivin (NCES), Sarah Crissey (NCES), Stephanie Cronen (AIR), Stephanie Ewert (Census), Sandy Eyster (AIR), Harley Frazis (BLS), Lisa Hudson (NCES), Bob Kominski (Census), Kashka Kubdzela (NCES), Shelly Martinez (OMB; by phone), Tom Nardone (BLS), Isaiah O'Rear (NCES), Chuck Pierret (CEA), Celeste Stone (AIR)

1. Welcome to new IWG member, Chuck Pierret, who is currently serving as a senior economist at the Council of Economic Advisors (CEA; on leave from his position as the Director of National Longitudinal Survey Programs at the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics)
2. The ATES draft technical report was discussed in terms of the framing, level of detail, and conclusions
 - a. Framing
 - i. The report is meant to be a technical report that will be released online, but will not have a wide dissemination.
 - ii. It is an NCES publication, but we should make it even clearer that it represents the work of an important initiative that has the support of the full IWG.
 - a) Add an appendix chronicling the work of the IWG—who was involved when, and what was done—and provide a timeline for our expected future activity.
 - iii. Make the goal more explicit—to measure C&Cs with a small number of items that can be included on household surveys that have space constraints.
 - a) We should also consider adding more policy context for the work (e.g., want to be able to measure the equivalent of one year of college).
 - iv. It is meant to represent what we have learned up to this point, and describe our next steps—and more detail should be added to these areas; for example:
 - a) Add CT order effect to Executive Summary (ES).
 - b) Add more details on which surveys the C&C items will or may be added to, and when.
 - b. Level of detail—no comments
 - c. Conclusions
 - i. We need to be careful about how we present the CN items, and recognize that the context of administration in other surveys may affect the properties of these items.
 - a) We may also want to discuss where those items should appear in a survey (i.e., there were CT order effects; any reason to expect CN placement to matter?).
 - ii. Somewhere (here or in framing) we should point out that CNs and CTs are not a pair; the two credentials are different, and it is valid to measure just CNs while we develop the CT measures further.
 - a) What we learned during cognitive testing is that Rs consider CNs to be about the labor market, whereas CTs are about schooling (e.g., people do not put their CNs in the educational section of their resume).
 - b) We may want to consider reporting on these two types of credentials separately in the ES to reinforce the idea that they are independent of each other.

- c) Measuring CNs may actually improve the measurement of educational attainment, since it gives people an option for recording that credential elsewhere.
 - iii. Similarly, we need to clarify what the issue with certifications vs. licenses was, and what can or cannot be asked of Rs.
 - a) Still valuable to differentiate between Lic/CN when possible.
 - b) These credentials may have real or perceived differences in labor market value.
 - iv. There may be a salience effect that we will not be able to resolve (approximately 15 percent of CNs were underreported in the seeded sample).
 - a) These underreported credentials imply that not all CNs necessarily have real or perceived labor market value, so our measures are somewhat biased towards those that do.
 - v. We might want to revise the conclusions somewhat to have a more substantive focus, based on what people might want to know.
 - a) If you want to know about all C&Cs, ask this set of questions.
 - b) If you add this item, you would also know X.
 - c) If you want to be able to differentiate between Lic/CNs, ask this question.
 - d) Etc.
- 3. Update on next steps for C&C development
 - a. The group is providing a rationale for including CN item on the ACS.
 - i. The value in having local estimates on CNs is that it provides information to policymakers and education providers on the characteristics of local populations.
 - b. A response rate study of CT items is also planned through the NHES
 - i. The group discussed characteristics to use in testing response rates: Educational attainment, employment, age (3 categories), and possibly gender.
- 4. The next meeting date is to be determined.
 - a. By October 29, members will provide comments on the report.
 - b. Meeting will be scheduled based on timeline for revising report based on IWG comments.

Interagency Working Group on Certificates and Certifications
Meeting Minutes

No Meeting in September 2011

Interagency Working Group on Certificates and Certifications
Meeting Minutes
August 9, 2011

Present

Sharon Boivin (NCES), Sarah Crissey (Census), Stephanie Cronen (AIR), Stephanie Ewert (Census), Sandy Eyster (AIR), Harley Frazis (BLS), Lisa Hudson (NCES), Bob Kominski (Census), Tom Nardone (BLS), Isaiah O'Rear (NCES), Matthew Soldner (NCES), Celeste Stone (AIR)

1. Upcoming work on measuring certificate
 - a. We are planning do more extensive testing of certificates items using a much larger seeded sample.
 - b. Items will also get additional development and piloting during the early stages of the research study.
2. Possible inclusion of C&C items on the American Community Survey (ACS)
 - a. The group discussed the possibility of getting items on the ACS; 2013–14 would probably be the earliest that this could happen.
3. Upcoming inclusion of C&C items on the SIPP
 - a. The Re-SIPP includes the basic CN1/CT1 items.
 - b. The new SIPP topical module will include a longer list of items and will be in the field in late 2012 or early 2013.

Certifications Items

- i. The draft SIPP version of CN1 will be revised so that Rs are not asked to distinguish whether their credential is a certification, license, or both; Rs have too much difficulty differentiating between the two types of credentials.
 - a) The source of the credential might be more useful than asking Rs to identify whether the credential is a certification or license.
 - b) Developmental work for the future research study may investigate how and when certifications and licenses differ.
- ii. The group discussed whether the intro text to the remaining certification questions should be restricted to work-related credentials, and decided to keep the intro as it is currently worded.
 - a) Certifications acquired for personal interest could still have labor market value, even if they are not currently used for work.
- iii. The group also discussed whether to ask for the name of the certification, and decided that it was worth having, but that a reduced number of field categories should be used for coding responses.
- iv. CN11 can be deleted.
- v. CN12 should be added (Is CN related to your current job?).

Certificates Items

- i. The response option “A trade school” for CT8 should be revised to include the labels “technical, vocational, or career” based on write-in responses during the pilot.
- ii. In the future, CT8 may also include a military-related option.
- iii. CT9 and CT9A were too difficult for Rs to answer accurately in the pilot; these items should be combined into a short list of response options (e.g., 1 day or less, 1 week or less, 1 month or less, or more than one month).
- iv. CT12 should be added (Is CT related to your current job?).

4. Updates to Constructing a Measure of True Positives document
 - a. An analysis of certification fields has been added to the document, but there was no obvious indication that Rs in certain fields were more likely to be misclassified as false positives.
5. Analysis of certifications and certificates by field
 - a. The distribution of certifications and certificates across fields was reasonable.
 - b. The list of fields should be simplified for use with the SIPP.
6. Analysis of verbatim string responses for “Other” sources of certificates
 - a. An examination of the verbatim responses showed that 13 percent of responses could have been coded during the interview under existing (non-“Other”) response options.
 - b. Many of the responses that could have been coded had ““technical,” “vocational,” or “career” in the name and should have been coded under trade school; these terms will be added to that response option in the future and interviewers will be trained to recognize these types of schools as trade schools.
 - c. The analysis of verbatim responses also found that many Rs reported an invalid certificate source (e.g., a federal, state, or local government, a business or company, a trade union), indicating that up to 20 percent of certificates reported were actually a certification or some other type of credential.
7. Analysis of benefits received from earning certifications and certificates
 - a. Around a third (32 percent) of Rs reporting a certification selected the “Other” benefits option for CN16.
 - b. An examination of the verbatim responses found that most “Other” benefits reported could have been coded under existing categories; further development is required for the benefits items.
8. The next meeting will be held on October 13.

Interagency Working Group on Certificates and Certifications
Meeting Minutes

No Meeting in July 2011

Interagency Working Group on Certificates and Certifications
Meeting Minutes
June 14, 2011

Present

Stacey Bielick (AIR), Sharon Boivin (NCES), Sarah Crissey (Census), Stephanie Cronen (AIR), Sandy Eyster (AIR), Elizabeth Farris (NCES), Harley Frazis (BLS), Lisa Hudson (NCES), Kwang Kim (Westat), Bob Kominski (Census), Kashka Kubdzela (NCES), Shelly Martinez (OMB), Jill Montaquila (Westat), Tom Nardone (BLS), Isaiah O'Rear (NCES), Matthew Soldner (NCES), Celeste Stone (AIR)

1. Update on the high false negative rate for certificates
 - a. It was discovered through conversations with the community college that the high false negative rate for its students was likely due to the college's guidance system automatically assigning a "certificate" of complete record to transfer students. The students had not, in fact, been awarded an educational certificate. The college had already begun internal discussions about making corrections to the system for reporting purposes.
 - b. The group discussed the possibility of this type of certificate tracking system creating mismatches between institutional and individual counts of certificates on a larger scale. Staff who work with institutional data are being consulted.
 - c. The possibility of looking at the community college data by certificate CIP code was discussed; if the CIP code that false certificates were assigned follows a consistent pattern, we can investigate certificates with similar codes in the ATES and other data collections more closely.
 - d. As stated previously, we need to keep in mind that we have a very small subset of the population included in the seeded sample; we need to be careful about generalizing on the basis of these results.
2. Update on the high false negative rate for certifications/licenses and certificates among older respondents and those not in the workforce
 - a. False negative rates on certifications/licenses were primarily being driven by labor force status, although rates vary to a lesser extent by sex and age as well.
 - b. A similar pattern was seen for certificates; however, small sample sizes limit the conclusions that can be drawn from the results.
 - c. These new findings, although based on limited sample sizes, have implications for who should be included in future surveys of this kind (e.g., adults in the workforce) which can be further tested in the upcoming Re-SIPP.
3. Methodology study results
 - a. Findings from the incentive experiments provide mixed support for higher incentives and for advanced notification regarding future incentives.
 - i. The level of incentive (\$0, \$10, or \$20) had a significant effect on the screener response rate and on the percentage providing a phone number on the screener, but did not affect the extended interview response rate.
 - ii. Advanced notification of a \$10 or \$20 incentive had a significant effect on both the screener and the extended interview response rates, as well as on the percent providing a phone number on the screener.
 - iii. Although there were significant effects on response rates, the differences between groups were not substantial (e.g., 51.8 percent for those notified of incentive in advance vs. 50.5 percent for those not notified).

- b. Asking respondents for a contact number on the screener improved phone number coverage over the vendor reverse-match approach, which increased the proportion of sampled adults with whom the extended interview could be attempted (from 67 percent to 96 percent).
 - i. Asking for a phone number on the screener further resulted in the ability to complete an extended interview with adults who more closely resembled the U.S. adult population distribution (based on the 2006–2008 American Community Survey).
 - c. An analysis of address type indicated that a non-negligible percentage of addresses characterized by USPS as “seasonal” and “vacant” were eligible addresses that resulted in increased sample.
4. Opportunities for additional data collection
 - a. We may be able to piggy back an adult education component with NHES to determine potential mail screener and survey response rates, in order to test the feasibility of the mail survey mode for our items. The group discussed how to ensure higher response rates than the previous NHES adult education survey, such as making it clear in the screener that the survey is relevant to adults (e.g., about work).
 - b. As discussed earlier, we also have future opportunities with Re-SIPP and SIPP, and possibly CPS and ACS.
 - c. In addition, we are coordinating with PIAAC for future administrations.
5. Additional proxy analysis
 - a. Proxies provide reasonable responses for basic items, such as whether or not the sampled adult holds a certification or license.
 - b. Excluding proxies with a “don’t know” response did not change the pattern of results.
 - c. Noncontact proxies (those who were interviewed only after the sampled adult could not be interviewed) also provided encouraging results.
 - d. Future analyses may include a look at proxy reporting by source (spouse vs. others).
 - e. These findings indicate that proxies are a promising source of basic information on credentials.
6. Parsimonious list
 - a. The group will need to select a parsimonious list soon for upcoming collections. IWG members had the following comments and suggestions:
 - i. It is unclear how much we will be able to ask about certificates (e.g., many reported “no reason” for getting the credential, sources cited vary substantially).
 - ii. Certifications/licenses look much better, and the associated bin factor data make sense—in particular, whether or not courses were taken to prepare, whether an exam was required to obtain it, and whether periodic tests or CEUs are required to maintain it. We may not need to ask about portfolios (small N), although those could be important indicators in specific fields.
 - iii. The quality of the data on hours spent preparing to get a credential is mixed.
 - b. While certifications and licenses were the original focus of the group, in adding certificates we have learned something important about our national data collections, and see that we have work to do in figuring out the best way to capture this type of credential. This is an important contribution to the field. People may only report credentials that have salient labor market value.
7. The next meeting will be held on August 9.

Interagency Working Group on Certificates and Certifications
Meeting Minutes
May 10, 2011

Present

Stacey Bielick (AIR), Sharon Boivin (NCES), Sarah Crissey (Census), Stephanie Cronen (AIR), Lisa Hudson (NCES), Bob Kominski (Census), Kashka Kubdzela (NCES), Saida Mamedova (AIR), Shelly Martinez (OMB), Tom Nardone (BLS), Jon O’Bergh (OUS-ED), Isaiah O’Rear (NCES), Celeste Stone (AIR)

1. Review of preliminary results of prevalence analyses
 - a. In general, the Princeton Data Improvement Initiative (PDII) vs. ATES results are similar; the ATES estimates tend to be a little higher because they are less restrictive (PDII asks only about *current* job).
 - b. The lower educational level category looks different, but the confidence interval is quite wide.
2. Review of preliminary results of false negatives/positives analyses
 - a. One community college had a very high false negative rate and was excluded from subsequent analyses. We need more information about this school’s “certificates.”
 - b. The false negative rate for certifications was reasonable, but the false negative rate for certificates was high, even after excluding that college. We anticipated having the opposite problem—people including too many “certificates” that do not meet our definition. We need to verify that our data sources gave us lists of people receiving what we consider to be educational certificates. Also, it is possible that the respondents do hold certificates, but answered “some college” in the ed attainment item and later considered the certificate item to be redundant.
 - c. There was a higher false negative rate among those not currently working or using their credential. It is possible that some of these negatives are due to expired credentials; the credentialing agencies should be able to provide this information.
 - d. It is also possible that negative responses indicate that the credential is not considered valuable. People who did not report one type of credential also tended not to report another type of credential, so it is not the case that they are confusing certificates and certifications. We should dig down into the data and find out more about these people. We should also do the tables separately for older/non-labor force respondents.
 - e. The numbers of false negatives are very small; ideally, we could follow up with these people to learn why they responded negatively.
 - f. The question of whom we want to include in the surveys was raised; do we want data on people who are not in the labor force?
 - g. We need to keep in mind that we have a very small subset of the population included in the seeded sample; we need to be careful about generalizing based on these results.
3. Review of preliminary results of other/bin factor analyses
 - a. Table 4—overall credential match rate of 91 percent indicates that we got what we expected to get for certifications/licenses.
 - b. Table 5—most certifications/licenses were for work-related reasons, also as expected.
 - c. Table 6—the items about length of time (CN8 and 9) do not work; we probably cannot expect respondents to be able to answer these types of questions. However, other potential bin factors do seem to work well (CN10-11 and CN14, in particular). Some may

need to be tightened up; for example, the second option under CN15 should get changed to something like, “Could someone get a job without this [certification][license]?”

- d. We would not include all of these items in a parsimonious set.
4. Review of preliminary results of proxy analyses
 - a. The overall “don’t know” rate for CT1/CN1 was fairly low; around 6 percent.
 - b. The CT items tended to have a higher percentage of “don’t know” responses than the CN items.
 - c. It would be good to re-run the distributions after excluding the “don’t know” and refused responses and add a column to the current tables with the smaller group of proxies added (those who were interviewed after we failed to reach the primary respondent).
 5. Technical report outline comments
 - a. We need to include some kind of summary, like a “Forward” section.
 - b. In the introduction, set up the bin factors by explaining what we expected to see. Set up all of our definitions early.
 - c. We may want to move section I.b. research question 3 to the top of the list.
 - d. Section II.b. might not be worth doing (small N).
 - e. Move section II.d. up between sections II.a.i. and II.a.ii.
 - f. Explain bin factor analyses in section III.b.
 - g. We need an introduction to section IV that describes our go/no go decision making on doing this type of data collection.
 - h. Ultimately, we will need a higher level summary of the project, once we have results from the Re-SIPP and SIPP wave 16 administrations.

Interagency Working Group on Certificates and Certifications
Meeting Minutes

No Meeting in April 2011

Interagency Working Group on Certificates and Certifications
Meeting Minutes
March 29, 2011

Present

Stacey Bielick (AIR), Sharon Boivin (NCES), Sarah Crissey (Census), Stephanie Cronen (AIR), Harley Frazis (BLS), Lisa Hudson (NCES), Bob Kominski (Census), Shelly Martinez (OMB), Tom Nardone (BLS), Jon O’Bergh (OUS-ED), Isaiah O’Rear (NCES), Celeste Stone (AIR)

1. Review of data files and preliminary QC results received to date
 - a. The results fell into three categories:
 - i. Problems with some skip patterns and variables in the draft file that were corrected in the final file
 - ii. CATI programming issues that will be used to inform future collections
 - iii. Minor issues with variables and weights (e.g., weights for Hispanic low-educated males were high)
2. Review of preliminary weighted and unweighted tables for the full sample
 - a. Highlighted findings discussed follow:
 - i. Table 2-C indicates that a large proportion of respondents (roughly 42 percent) who volunteer holding a vocational diploma that is not equivalent to a high school diploma do not report having an educational certificate.
 - ii. Table 2-D demonstrates that using the certificates probe results in a larger percentage of respondents reporting a certificate; future data collections may therefore benefit from using the probe with all respondents.
 - iii. Table 2-E shows that 21 percent of respondents with less than a high school education hold a certificate or license/certification; this implies that the lowest education group holds credentials with labor market value that we were previously not collecting data on. At the other end of the spectrum, the group found it surprising that 54 percent of doctoral degree holders also hold a certificate or license/certification.
 - iv. Tables 3-A and 4-A suggest that we could capture nearly all certifications/licenses and certificates if we ask for only up to 2.
 - v. Tables 3-B-4 and 4-B-2 indicates that respondents have difficulty providing time estimates (weeks or hours), although these items may still be useful for screening out people at the low end (e.g., 8 hours to get a certificate).
 - vi. Table 3-B-5 validates the need to include “demonstration of skills while on-the-job” and “portfolio of work” response options.
 - vii. Table 3-B-6’s “periodic tests” result may suggest an interesting variation by field pattern that we can investigate.
 - viii. Table 3-B-7 held several interesting findings—14 percent of respondents reported getting a certification/license from “other” sources (a review of string responses found many citing a city or county as the source); also, the percentage reporting “state” as the source was quite high (68 percent), which may reflect a new trend in state certifications that does not completely match our definition.
 - ix. Similarly, the table 4-B-3 results suggests that a fairly large proportion of respondents are getting certificates “someplace else” other than the expected sources (colleges and trade schools); we will review the string responses to determine whether the responses reflect legitimate sources and, if so, whether new response options should be added. The group also discussed the fact that the

“business or company” sources might actually be a result of partnerships with local colleges, although we will not be able to determine if this is the case. In addition, some of the trade school sources may not meet our criteria, but we do not ask for string responses to that response option.

- x. Table 5-A indicates that the overlap between certifications/licenses and certificate programs is quite high, but this finding does match what we learned during the cognitive labs. We will investigate this pattern further with the seeded sample.
 - xi. Overall, with the exception of the weeks/hours items, and to some extent the source of certificates, the bin factor results are consistent with our expectations.
3. Review of preliminary prevalence analyses
- a. Comparisons with SIPP yielded mixed findings (i.e., some statistically significant differences emerged between ATES and SIPP), although the ATES results passed the “laugh test” in all comparisons.
 - b. The group suggested that some of the differences may be due to time effects (SIPP data are older), and that a recent surge in this type of credential attainment could explain the differences.
4. Discussion of next steps
- a. Additional prevalence analyses will be conducted (e.g., comparisons with IPEDS).
 - b. Credential-level estimates, rather than person-level estimates will be calculated, and patterns by industry/occupation will be investigated.
 - c. Bin factor analyses will continue with the seeded sample.
 - d. Tables will be run for proxy sample to determine the feasibility of using proxy respondents in the future.
 - e. Once results are complete, document our approach and summarize our results and what they imply for future data collections. We will need to make it clear when we share results that the field test was a methodological study and was not intended to provide official statistics.
 - f. Work with NCES data security staff to see if we can expedite getting the ATES data to our colleagues at Census and BLS.
 - g. We will prepare a draft field test report before 9/30.
5. The next meeting will be held on May 10 and will focus on reviewing results from the next iteration of analyses.

Interagency Working Group on Certificates and Certifications
Meeting Minutes
February 8, 2011

Present

Stacey Bielick (AIR), Sharon Boivin (NCES), Sarah Crissey (Census), Stephanie Cronen (AIR), Harley Frazis (BLS), Sandy Eyster (AIR) Kashka Kubzdela (NCES), Shelly Martinez (OMB), Tom Nardone (BLS), Jon O’Bergh (OUS-ED), Isaiah O’Rear (NCES), Matthew Soldner (NCES), Celeste Stone (AIR)

1. Review and discussion of preliminary pilot test main sample results
 - a. Reminder that tables are preliminary and numbers are likely to change.
 - b. Draft final data files with weights and industry/occupation/field of study coding will be available on February 25.
 - c. The first goal for today is to generate additional analysis ideas and talk about external data sources for validation comparisons (prevalence analyses).
 - i. Other data sources will be based on more limited populations (e.g., age, educational attainment, or employment status restrictions), so we will need to restrict the ATES sample for comparison purposes.
 - ii. Other sources will also ask about credentials differently (e.g., SIPP’s vocational certificate items), so estimates cannot be expected to match – but should be reasonably similar.
 - d. Notable findings discussed by the group included:
 - i. Among Rs with a certification (CN) or license, the majority have either a license only or both a CN and license.
 - ii. CN/license holders overwhelmingly reported having to pass a test or exam—one of our primary bin factors.
 - iii. CN/license holders most often reported that their credential was issued by a state; a fairly large number of Rs also reported “Other” issuing sources, which we will want to investigate (e.g., check verbatim string and industry/occupations).
 - iv. Most certificate (CT) holders reported having only one CT.
 - v. The majority of CT holders reported receiving the credential from a community college, another university or college, or a trade school—which is exactly what we expected to see (a CT bin factor)—however, 26 percent reported receiving a CT from “Someplace else,” which we will need to investigate (e.g., check verbatim string).
 - vi. Overall, the data make sense so far, although we will want to investigate the verbatim strings for CN/license and CT issuers.
 - e. ESSI will ask Westat if it has a debriefing report; this will give us insights into the items that Rs had difficulty in answering.
 - i. The details on CN16/CT14 (perceived benefits of credential) would be particularly useful in preparation for the B&B—there was a suggestion to convert to close-ended items requiring yes/no responses.
 - f. An additional issue that came up was Rs age—we may need an upward bound on age to exclude people who have been out of the workforce for an extended period of time.
 - i. We will need to think this through—there is push-back to raise the upper bound on age in data collections as more people work longer (e.g., 69 may be too young as an upper bound).
 - g. Final response rates and Ns follow:
 - i. Screener response – 52 percent; Topical response – 46 percent
 - ii. National sample completes – 3,743; Seeded sample completes – 343

- h. Next steps—identify sources of comparison data.
 - i. We may want to consider using the CPS 2010 instead of the ACS 2009 for analysis 1-A; there was a 4 to 5 percent increase in high school graduates and better coverage in the CPS (alternatively, restrict to ACS residential population).
- 2. New opportunities to test C&C items
 - a. Two opportunities to test items as part of upcoming SIPP administrations
 - i. Field test of new SIPP design in 2012—will allow us to further test our basic enumeration items.
 - ii. Extension of the SIPP 2008 panel for administrations beginning in 2012—based on our ATES analyses, we can identify important bin factors and include these items in a SIPP 2008 panel topical module.
 - b. Review of proposed items for SIPP
 - i. Restrictions—we cannot change the education attainment item, and must keep list of items short.
 - ii. Order of items—in ATES, we asked CN items first so that CN holders would not falsely respond that they had a CT (based on cog lab testing); however, in the SIPP survey, this will not be possible and basic CT items will follow the educational attainment item.
 - iii. New enrollment items
 - a) They are modeled after NPSAS items.
 - b) They would allow us to find out if degree holders are going back to school for an occupational credential.
 - c) Credential1 does not currently include high school, but we will give that more consideration.
 - d) Certification_enrollment1 was discussed at length (e.g., whether to ask about current enrollment, receipt of CN in past year, or just if they hold a CN) and ultimately cut from the enrollment (calendar) section; would be better to include something similar (e.g., earned CN in past year) as a standalone item in the basic education or job training sections.
 - 1) Group had mixed opinions on value of finding out if a CN was earned in the past year.
 - 2) Would be most useful if we could know if it is related to R's job or a new occupation.
 - (a) We have had difficulty getting this kind of information.
 - (b) May be possible instead to ask a field of study question in the enrollment section, using general categories.
 - e) One of our purposes is to test/compare with SIPP, which argues for using ATES items as they are—the ultimate goal is to have a limited set of items that can be used across multiple surveys.
 - 1) The calendar help text is where we could add text to encourage Rs to include the occupational credential and training information we are interested in, if we are concerned about people underreporting.

GEMEnA Meeting Notes: December 2009 through September 2014

Interagency Working Group on Certificates and Certifications
Meeting Minutes

No Meeting or Notes Unavailable in October 2010 – January 2011

Interagency Working Group on Certificates and Certifications
Meeting Minutes
September 14, 2010

Present

Stacey Bielick (AIR), Sharon Boivin (NCES), Sarah Crissey (Census), Stephanie Cronen (AIR), Harley Frazis (BLS), Lisa Hudson (NCES), Bob Kominski (Census), Kashka Kubzdela (NCES), Shelly Martinez (OMB Jill Montaquilla (Westat), Jon O’Bergh (OUS-ED), Isaiah O’Rear (NCES), Matthew Soldner (NCES), Tom Weko (NCES)

1. Updates on pilot data collection
 - a. 9/15/10: Mailing goes out
 - b. 9/22/10: Mail reminder postcards
 - c. 10/6/10: Nonresponse follow-up by USPS (First Class)
 - d. 10/20/10: Nonresponse follow-up by FedEx
 - e. 10/22/10: Begin telephone interviews
 - f. 1/15/11: End data collection
 - g. Post-data collection; IWG members can get access to the raw data file to do whatever analysis they want to do.
 - i. Preliminary at two weeks (~ end of January)
 - ii. Cleaned at six weeks (~ end of February)
2. Focus of today’s meeting: analysis goals and plans for pilot study
 - a. The top-level goal: To identify the most efficient battery of questions that will enable us to accurately count the prevalence of certificates, certifications, and licenses in the U.S. adult population.
 - b. Goal 1 / Estimate Overall Rates
 - i. Estimate is a tough word to use. Perhaps prevalence?
 - ii. Although we will unavoidably produce an estimate, our purpose is not to “market it.” As a result, we need to be cautious about how we couch and present it. Remember that we will not be releasing official statistics from this study.
 - iii. We have to be cautious about acknowledging how we need to both distinguish between these three things and acknowledge the overlap amongst them.
 - c. Goal 2 / Estimate Rates by Group
 - i. As it relates to immigration status, we have two issues at work:
 - a) Language fluency
 - b) Reporting of foreign credentials
 - ii. To ensure we know what respondents are talking about, interviewers should prompt for the meaning of initials, abbreviations, and so forth (e.g., “HVAC RD-1 is a what, precisely?”)
 - d. Goal 3 / Determine Rate of False Negatives via Seeded Sample
 - i. Our seeded sample draws from all credential (i.e., certificates, certifications, and licenses) lists, but we oversampled a few categories to help identify whether there are field-related differences (e.g., pharmacy, plumbers, gas/electric inspectors, CC certificates, health related, and real estate).
 - ii. Tried to pick some professions that are generally apprenticeship-type training, to see if apprenticeship might matters.
 - iii. Are there recency effects?

- e. Goal 4 / Determine Rate of False Positives and Identify Key Bin Factors (In or Out?)
 - i. Perhaps this (and Goal 3) should be listed as the primary goal, given that we aren't trying to generate national estimates (Goal 1 and Goal 2) from this work.
 - ii. The bin factors are going to be different for the certificate versus certifications, and the certificate bin factors are likely to be a bit more challenging.
 - iii. Bin factors
 - a) Certificates
 - 1) Source: potentially moderately predictive
 - 2) Time: potentially highly predictive
 - 3) An *a priori* hypothesis is that level of effort will be the determinant
 - b) Certification and licensure
 - 1) Pass a test or exam: potentially highly predictive
 - 2) Periodic tests/CEU: potentially highly predictive
 - 3) Revoked/suspended: potentially highly predictive
 - 4) *Remember*: certifications lapse, certificates don't.
 - f. Goal 5 / Evaluate Proxy Responses
 - i. Marital status may be less relevant than the time (or timing) of association between the target and the proxy.
 - ii. When evaluating the "don't knows," we need to be conscious of looking at DK's across questions. For example, if respondents DK attainment at the same rate they DK race, then no problem. However, if DK rates are substantively higher on one question set than another, it signals a potential problem.
 - g. Goal 6 / Evaluate Methodological Issues
 - h. Based on the conversation at the meeting, the new goals (with references to above) follow:
 - i. Examine our ability to identify false positives (Goal 4)
 - ii. Determine the extent of false negatives (Goal 3)
 - iii. Assess face validity of pilot study results (Goals 1 and 2)
 - iv. Evaluate proxy responses (Goal 5)
 - v. Examine methodological issues (Goal 6)
3. Discussion of which is worse: a false positive or a false negative?
- a. A false positive is worse because a large number of false positives will skew our (presumably) smaller population of certifications, certificate, and license holders and will lessen our ability to make accurate estimates and comparisons.
 - b. False negatives get "washed" into the average of a larger population.
4. Specific tasks
- a. For Westat
 - i. Can we have a more detailed sampling design – initials, yield goals?
 - ii. Can we track how often the CINTRO probe is used?
 - iii. Can we expand the response of CT9 to four digits?
 - b. For ESSi and Westat
 - i. What about geographic portability for licenses? (See CN15.)
 - c. For ESSi and Westat and ED
 - i. Work through more precisely what the analytic plans are.
5. Update on NCES adult education efforts
- a. Questions

- i. What do we need to know about adult education (participation, skills/competencies, and outcomes) and why?
 - ii. What implications does that have for our data collections (e.g., NAAL, PIAAC)?
- b. Focus groups on first question are being scheduled now beginning with DOL/ETA and ED's OVAE.

Interagency Working Group on Certificates and Certifications
Meeting Minutes
August 10, 2010

Present

Stacey Bielick (AIR; phone), Sharon Boivin (NCES), Sarah Crissey (Census), Stephanie Cronen (AIR), Harley Frazis (BLS), Lisa Hudson (NCES), Kashka Kubzdela (NCES; phone), Jill Montaquilla (Westat), Tom Nardone (BLS), Jon O’Bergh (OUS-ED), Matthew Soldner (NCES)

1. Project updates
 - a. Thanks to the Acting Commissioner, NCES has located money to pay for the pilot study, allowing us to move forward as planned.
 - b. Review where we’ve been.
 - i. The timeline was distributed.
 - ii. Review of accomplishments to date (pg. 2 of *Data Development on Certificates and Certifications*).
 - iii. Pilot clearance expected by August 14.
 - c. Review current activities.
 - i. Mail-out screener is basically ready.
 - ii. Next step is to do a complete test run of the screener from merging the data in to the letter and form to printing it to filling out a few to scanning them in to Teleform.
 - iii. National sample has been received from vendor, seeded sample files have been received.
 - iv. The study’s Integrated Management System is being developed.
 - d. First mail-out of the enumerating screener is September 15.
 - i. Designed to hit households when people can pay attention—after Labor Day and the start-of-school rush
 - ii. Two follow-ups on the screener
 - iii. \$2 incentive
 - iv. CATI extended interview
 - a) Three incentives will be used: \$0, \$10 vs. \$20.
 - b) OMB has asked us to add back in the \$0 incentive but we will be doing that for a smaller sample.
 - c) We will be looking at proxy responses in particular.
 - e. At September meeting, members will receive information about the analytic plan. Specific issues we will confront include these:
 - i. Addressing proxy response
 - ii. Analyzing validity via seeded sample
 - iii. Psychometrics/characteristics of questionnaire itself
 - f. Seeded sample of license, certificate, and certification holders
 - i. One state (licenses)
 - ii. Community colleges (certificate holders)
 - iii. Certification agencies
 - iv. We want a few clusters of certifications we think will be ubiquitous. Sampling strategy will be to balance focusing on large groups of similar occupations (e.g., real estate and cardiology techs), along with a smattering of folks in all occupations.

2. Next steps (January, once pilot completes)
 - a. Remember, we began with: what does some college mean?
 - i. Leisure course-taking?
 - ii. Still enrolled?
 - iii. Received certificate?
 - iv. 119 credits toward a BA?
 - b. Generally
 - i. Rs understand that if they received a certificate, it should go in their educational attainment.
 - ii. Rs believe that certification and licensure are distinct from educational attainment, as they are seen as distinctively work-related.
 - c. This leads to two paths
 - i. How do we make this attainment item consistent across the federal statistical system?
 - ii. How do we count certifications and licenses, given the policy interest? Methodologically, how would this happen (e.g., March CPS, October CPS)?
 - d. As it relates to sub-baccalaureate attainment (certificates)
 - i. If respondents say they have more than a HSDEG and less than an AA, maybe, just for those people, we send them off to a 3 or 4 question nest to gather additional detail. This is especially simple in CATI.
 - ii. There's currently a nest in CPS that does some of that, which may benefit from a little revisiting.
 - iii. What do we need to do to test the validity of our item and, once done, what are processes do we need to put in place in order to get a new item "ready" and to say to OMB, "we've tested this, we want to try this, what do we need to do?" We've talked about using retiring CPS panels ... not sure we can answer this now, but think: What processes would we put in place to test this item? We need to know something is working before we put it on the CPS, presumably our ultimate goal.
 - a) For CPS: It's hard to know until we've done the testing; we should be willing to continue to test. We might want to do additional cognitive testing and test it more in a supplement.
 - b) For ACS: The ACS process is likely to be different ... generally long and stringent. The next content change for ACS is really 2018. Although this seems like a long way off, it may be beneficial for us because there'll be a chance to gather data we can show Census.
 - c) With buy-in, there could be a strong push from OMB for all statistical agencies to get on board.
 - d) Relevant agencies need to:
 - 1) Begin to plan for these possible changes and raise it at the highest level needed (e.g., program plan memos for next year).
 - 2) Identify resources, to the extent that these are additions, not changes ... the 2013 budget cycle is upon us. Unfortunately, without knowing the result of the pilot, it is hard to know whether we're talking change/substitute or addition.
 - e. Certifications/licensure
 - i. This would presumably
 - a) appear on a supplement and
 - b) be in the range of three to five items.
 - ii. What's the budget implication? Unknown until the vehicle is determined.
 - iii. Is additional testing needed?

- a) If in supplement, it'd probably get tested along with the other items in the supplement.
 - b) Remember that the March and October have different contexts ... labor-focused and education enrollment (not attainment)-focused ... and although we think we know something about context effects, we should continue to be cognizant of evaluating them.
3. Other NCES-related updates
- a. An effort to reconceptualize our CTE studies; background papers. We'll be having a meeting in January with the authors and some respondents and then begin a discussion of what the results of the study mean for our work @ NCES. All are invited to be involved.
 - b. We have been asked to think about what we need to know about adult education and why, and then figure out how to use NCES studies to answer those questions. This includes adult basic education, adult secondary education, ESL, workforce training, and other types of adult education not tied to a degree program. Again, everyone is welcome to become involved to the extent to which they'd like.

Interagency Working Group on Certificates and Certifications
Meeting Minutes

No Meeting on July 2010

Interagency Working Group on Certificates and Certifications
Meeting Minutes
June 8, 2010

Present

Liz Ananat (CEA), Stacey Bielick (AIR), Sharon Boivin (NCES), Sarah Crissey (Census), Stephanie Cronen (AIR), Harley Frazis (BLS), Lisa Hudson (NCES), Stuart Kerachky (NCES), Bob Kominski (Census), Kashka Kubzdela (NCES), Tom Nardone (BLS), Jon O’Bergh (OUS-ED), Matthew Soldner (NCES)

1. Extended interview questionnaire
 - a. After receiving feedback from IWG members, the materials for the cognitive interviews went to OMB last week. Clearance is expected in a few days.
 - b. Once cleared, 20 additional cognitive interviews will be completed using the new questionnaire.
 - c. Other materials including the contacting letter and screener will also be tested.
2. Feedback on the Shugoll Research’s report on the first two rounds of cognitive interviews
 - a. Members were asked to submit feedback on Shugoll’s report on the initial rounds of cognitive interviewing no later than the end of June.
3. Response rate options
 - a. Westat prepared a memo outlining several strategies for improving response rates to the pilot study.
 - b. As a reminder, we do *not* need to meet NCES standards for response rates, because we do not intend to release official statistics at the conclusion of data collection.
 - c. Six strategies were outlined (see below); comments from IWG panelists about each are summarized below:
 - i. Adding a third screener
 - a) Based on experience from NHES, it is believed that this approach will yield the greatest response rate gains at both the screener and the extended interview phase of the pilot (5 percent and 10 percent, respectively).
 - b) There is some concern that NHES’s experience may be inflated, given that parents might be inclined to “overrespond.”
 - ii. Using a telephone follow-up for a subsample of screener nonrespondents
 - a) Questions arose about whether the anticipated cost included both programming time *and* labor. We will investigate and ask Westat to clarify how their cost estimates were generated.
 - iii. Increasing the incentive accompanying the screener
 - a) Although increasing the screener incentive from \$2 to \$5 for a subsample of respondents would be expected to yield somewhat higher response rates, it was not evident that the cost is reasonable given anticipated response rate gains (~1 percent to both screener and extended interview).
 - iv. Including a magnet (or other “bulky” item) in the screener mailing
 - a) Including a magnet or other “bulky” item in the screener mail was suggested as a way to encourage respondents to open the mailing itself.
 - b) A discussion was had about the most effective item to include, specifically whether a gift/check-card might be useful. The survey

- response literature suggests that cash is better, so there is no real benefit of using a checkcard over a magnet (or other useful item).
- v. Offering a promised incentive for the extended survey
 - 1) Panelists discussed whether offering a promised incentive for completing the extended interview would be valuable and, if so, what the appropriate level might be given the extant literature. No consensus was reached other than the utility of incentives varied by the sponsor of the survey, the amount of the survey (including the prospect of diminishing returns), and respondent characteristics.
 - 2) The group was reminded that, at least at the design stage, cost should be subordinated to best practice ... After identifying what we would ideally do, we can distill down to what we *can* do, given available resources.
 - vi. Mailing out a paper version of the extended interview to screener non-respondents
 - 1) Panelists discussed whether an abbreviated paper interview might be appropriate, and whether differential incentives could be tested/employed.
 - 2) No clear consensus emerged.
 - d. Several panelists expressed concern that efforts to improve response rate might actually be unnecessarily complicating study implementation and/or introducing unanticipated bias.
 - i. As a reminder, *none* of these options are directly relevant to our primary goal: developing items that can be used to measure attainment in other federal surveys (e.g., CPS, ACS). As such, we need to be judicious in making choices about which, if any, we implement.
 - e. Based on panelist discussion, it appears that several of the options reviewed are viable (especially option i) and may be effective at achieving one of two purposes of the “upping response rate” exercise:
 - i. Reducing bias that would interfere with our ability to make appropriate inferences about the results of the pilot study and the efficacy of the instrument, and (much less important)
 - ii. Testing strategies that may be informative for other studies.
4. Other design features: Panelists reviewed some additional methodological considerations/design features that might be incorporated in to ATES:
- a. Testing accuracy of proxy response
 - i. For a subsample of respondents, we are considering asking the primary respondent to respond about a pre-identified respondent in the house. We would use the extent of the “don’t knows” to help get a response about what proxies can, and cannot, answer about others in their household.
 - ii. If we have not been able to reach a sampled respondent by the end of outbound calling, we would accept a proxy response from any adult in the household.
 - iii. Although panelists considered whether or not proxy respondents should be *encouraged* to offer up “don’t know” as a response to try to discourage overhelping, it was decided to abandon the idea: that is not what happens in the CPS, for example, so why would we want to artificially introduce it here?
 - iv. The seeded sample would seem to be an opportunity here: it would allow us to check the proxy response for accuracy.

- b. Seeded sample
 - i. The seeded sample was discussed. As a reminder, it will come from a national accrediting agency, from a set of states, and from community colleges.
 - ii. At a minimum, we will receive locating information and details on the credential awarded.
 - iii. This will allow us to check the efficacy of the questionnaire, to get a sense about validity, and to detect false negatives.
 - c. Item wording experiment
 - i. The cognitive interviews suggested that we might need to produce some introductory text to help cue the respondent to what we want them to respond about, particularly vis-à-vis certificates.
 - ii. An experiment was proposed, exposing half of respondents to a “short” version of explanatory text and the other a “longer” version of that same text. Post hoc, any text effect will be explored.
 - iii. Panelists expressed concerns that, like “don’t know” in 4-a above, this method is unlike what is going to occur if the attainment items find their way to the CPS, SIPP, or other federal survey. As such, will it really be informative?
5. There will be NO July meeting of the IWG due to multiple schedule conflicts. The next meeting will be held on August 10.

Interagency Working Group on Certificates and Certifications
Meeting Minutes
May 11, 2010

Present

Liz Ananat (CEA), Stacey Bielick (AIR), Sharon Boivin (NCES), Sarah Crissey (Census), Stephanie Cronen (AIR), Harley Frazis (BLS), Lisa Hudson (NCES), Bob Kominski (Census), Kashka Kubzdela (NCES), Shelly Martinez (OPM), Jill Montaquila (Westat), Tom Nardone (BLS), Jon O’Bergh (OUS-ED), Matthew Soldner (NCES)

1. Discussion of mode issues for the Adult Training and Education Survey (ATES) pilot
 - a. The group reviewed the ATES sample design issues.
 - i. Coverage
 - a) Address-based sampling (ABS) frame has good coverage, up to 90 percent of households. However, a problem arises when we move to the extended interview, because not all potential Rs have a phone number.
 - b) We can ask a vendor to match phone numbers to addresses, or ask for the telephone number in the screening instrument.
 - c) Through those approaches, we can get to about 70 percent of screened households. For the remaining 30 percent we have undercoverage.
 - ii. Landline Random Digit Dialing (LRDD)
 - a) This has about same rate of undercoverage, which can be boosted with a cell supplement.
 - b) We would have to do a cell supplement if young adults are of interest, as they’re the group least likely to have a land line.
 - c) As a result, LRDD plus a cell supplement is likely to yield the greatest coverage.
 - iii. Nonresponse
 - a) We’d expect better response to the screener.
 - b) Rates decline with LRDD and even further with cell.
 - iv. Within-household sampling
 - a) There is going to be intra-household correlation.
 - b) To avoid, we need to enumerate all adults on the screener and ensure that that we sample only one adult per household.
 - c) Both approaches can accommodate this.
 - v. Weighting
 - a) Weighting is not applicable for this study, although were national estimates desired, weights would be needed due to differences between the cell-only and landline population.
 - b) There’s also differential non-response within landline only, cell only, landline plus cell “strata.”
 - b. Panelists raised various suggestions for consideration and issues:
 - i. Suggestion: Include a check-box on the screener for the respondent to indicate whether the number they have provided is landline (home or elsewhere, perhaps) or a cell.
 - ii. Issue: Were burden not an issue, the screener would likely ask for the best number for each possible R.
 - a) However, that is a serious increase in burden because it requires whoever completes the screener to know all the numbers or to wait until they can get the information from each person in the household.

- b) The alternative is to use a single best number, attempt to reach the sample HH member on that number, and, if they aren't present/available, get appropriate recontacting information.
 - iii. Issue: Will we call screener nonrespondents if we get a vendor match for a number? If so, we would have to enumerate people in the household via a CATI-based screener.
 - iv. Issue: With an ABS, you have to confirm the address to detect possible mismatches.
 - v. Issue: With an RDD with cell phone supplement, you need to make sure that respondents are able to respond safely and be engaged, and you have to be sensitive that some folks still pay for minutes.
 - c. The consensus of the group was to opt for an ABS approach.
 - i. The group was ecumenical about whether screener nonrespondents would be contacted if we received a vendor match to a sampled household.
 - ii. The statistical consequence of following up (or not following up) with nonrespondents is not entirely clear, but the group felt that the most important consideration was yield, particularly in important subgroups.
 - iii. That would suggest that we need to have a larger initial mailout. Prior studies (e.g., NHES) have demonstrated the value of mail follow-ups, particularly for groups that have a lower propensity for initial response to mailout screeners.
- 2. Moving from cognitive interviews to developing pilot instrumentation
 - a. All CIs are now complete.
 - i. The report on CIs will be shared with the group as soon as it is complete.
 - ii. Based on the CIs, preliminary pilot instrumentation has been developed.
 - b. A decision was made to begin the pilot by asking about certifications. Beginning with certificates seemed to interfere with the proper enumeration of certifications.
 - c. A member indicated that several respondents were unable to disentangle certifications and licenses.
 - i. As a result, the pilot is slated to ask individuals whether they have a license, a certification, or both, and then follow-up with "binning" questions that will help us understand what factors do and do not distinguish between these types of credentials.
 - d. The greatest concern of the group was that we be able to elicit information about the education and training that the individual went through to get the credential.
 - i. As a result, we want to add directive language to the pilot to cue the respondent appropriately.
 - e. Panelists were reminded that this process is *not* meant to identify the question/questions that will eventually find their way in to other federal surveys.
 - i. Instead, it is to help us understand the relevant phenomena so we can use a smaller set of targeted questions that are informed by the data.
 - f. Several panelists reacted to text in the certificate portion of the interview that referred to a "vocational diploma," which is meant to represent a post-high school "diploma" (aka certificate) referred to by some respondents.
 - i. This text will be dropped, but the interviewer will be advised to listen for that type of language, ensure it truly was postsecondary, and code appropriately.
 - g. A panelist suggested that the educational attainment question proposed in the first draft of the pilot interview be replaced with the CATI version used by ACS.
 - i. That revision will be made in the next round.
 - h. Panelists were asked to review the pilot's back-matter and send comments by May 28. Two things are relevant in that review:

- i. Will the question be useful in analyzing the data we gather?
 - ii. Does the question add “meat” to the interview in the event that the sampled R does not have any credential of interest?
3. Sampling issues
 - a. Panelists were walked through a memo on sampling design, which recommends that 20,000 addresses be sampled; 18,750 will be nationally representative and 1,250 will be from a seeded list of people with licenses of certifications.
 - i. This should allow us to detect a false negative rate of 2 percent.
 - b. Raw yield rates by demographic characteristics, based only on current population proportions, were presented to the group for a first reaction to *ns* for subanalyses.
4. Concluding issues
 - a. The next meeting will address experimental issues, including proxies and reliability analysis, and the seeded sample.
 - b. The group was asked to read through all the materials shared at the meeting and send comments on the sample design memo by May 14 and comments on the questionnaire be sent by May 28.
5. The next meeting will be held on June 9.

Email Communication on Mode Discussion

Email 1

The working group met yesterday and they are coming up with some key subgroups for estimating sample size requirements. I have asked for that to be decided in the next week.

Regarding the questionnaire, I will send you a very rough draft version of the questionnaire at the same time I send it to NCES for review in the next few days. This draft will be very rough and NCES and others will have changes. However, this is the best I can do to provide you with information about what the questionnaire is expected to look like so you can roughly estimate programming costs. We will have a completed questionnaire after the AAPOR conference, as discussed at the kick-off meeting. There was some debate about the Spanish translation, and may be some more, but for planning purposes, we are leaning toward no translation so assume there will not be a Spanish translation.

IWG members suggested we consider an RDD telephone survey with a mobile phone component. The primary concern with the two-stage mail/telephone method was that we weren't actually "screening" for any population characteristics for survey eligibility (e.g. households with children) so she didn't think the two-stage proposal was necessary. I gave 3 reasons why I felt an address-based survey with a mail *contact* screener (as opposed to a population screener) was preferable to RDD with mobile phone supplement. These reasons are:

- 1) There are ethical issues associated with "cold calling" mobile phones.
- 2) Mobile phone response rates are very low - I think in the 20 percent range? And of course RDD is low too.
- 3) A full telephone survey would cost more than the two stage mail/telephone proposal. One member did not think this was the case. I don't have expertise in survey operations, but I thought it would be cheaper to mail to, say 10,000 households for initial contact, than it is to hire telephone interviewers to call 10,000 households for initial contact because we can expect at least half of the sample in either mode, to be nonresponse or noncontact so we would be saving interviewer cost on about half the sample. But perhaps other logistics issues, like form linking and programming, and printing, would offset that cost differential?

Can you please weigh in on these 3 assumptions, just briefly in a email, or send me a working paper or publication reference, to let me know if I have got this wrong or right. Particularly the cost issue. Also, if you see other pros or cons to the RDD + mobile phone method, let me know. I think there are also issues with mobile phone frames, and to be representative requires weighting and other statistical manipulations that we aren't proposing for this pilot.

Email 2

Thanks for forwarding these draft questionnaires. We'll take a look and get back to you regarding items that should go on the Screener. (This will also depend on what decisions the Interagency Working Group reaches regarding oversampling of specific subdomains.) We'll also review the sample size requirements

materials you sent and let you know if we have any questions or comments (in anticipation of filling in the table).

Regarding the RDD (landline+cell) alternative and the discussion around that that you described below, here are my reactions to the points you raised:

- (1) This is not really the case. There are certain special operational considerations that need to be taken into account (the TCPA prohibits the use of autodialers to call cell numbers—they must be “hand-dialed”; questions should be added to the beginning of the interview to ensure that it’s safe and feasible for the respondent to talk at that time; incentives are often offered to offset charges for minutes that some respondents incur; etc.), but as long as these are addressed, there really aren’t ethical issues with including cell numbers in an RDD study.
- (2) It is true that in RDD studies with both cell and landline components, the cell response rates tend to be considerably lower than the landline response rates. (The results of several studies suggest something on the order of about 1/3 lower response rates for cell than landline.)
- (3) We’ve done some rough (back-of-the-envelope) calculations and these are indicating that if we hold the expected number of completed extendeds fixed (for the two options), the ABS mail screener with phone extended and RDD (landline+cell) options have about the same data collection cost. (Our back-of-the-envelope calculations are showing the ABS mail screener with phone extended to be about 94 percent of the cost of the RDD approach.) This is data collection cost only, and does not include design, systems/forms development, or post-data-collection activities.

Regarding the concern that we aren’t actually “screening” for any population, that is true (and perhaps the use of the term “screener” is a misnomer in such situations...It’s really an enumeration instrument.). But we’re using the “screener” to obtain information needed for sampling and to obtain a phone number to use to call back to administer the extended. The screener would be very short (the estimated burden for the NHES screenout is about 3 minutes...I would expect this one to be about the same). If we were to take the RDD approach, we would still need to set it up as a screener (used to enumerate and sample adults) followed by an extended survey with the sampled adult. We would need to be able to call back to administer a separate extended if the sampled adult is not available at the time the screener is completed.

You are correct that the landline+cell RDD approach does require weighting in order to be representative, and the weighting is relatively complex.

I’m attaching a few papers that address some of these issues...You may already have these, but I thought I would send them just in case you didn’t.

Email 3

Below is an email from with responses to my questions about the mobile phone approach. Some methodological papers were also attached.

To summarize:

1. Ethical issues: They can take certain operational precautions when cold calling mobile phones (dial method, initial safety and privacy questions, incentive) to eliminate the ethical concerns.

2. Response rates: Mobile phone response rates are expected to be 1/3 lower than landline response rates.
3. Cost: Their back of the envelope calculations show that data collection costs for this particular study would be similar between the RDD + cell approach and the address approach, with the RDD + cell costing slightly more.
4. Other: The household enumeration burden would be the same in both a mail or phone version; Inclusion of mobile phones requires weighting in order to be nationally representative.

Please let me know if you want to reconsider the mode. I would be happy to offer my opinion on these issues, but did not want to sway you either way initially.

If you want to simply share the email exchanges here, that is fine with me.

Interagency Working Group on Certificates and Certifications
Meeting Minutes
April 13, 2010

Present

Liz Ananat (CEA), Stacey Bielick (AIR), Sharon Boivin (NCES), Sarah Crissey (Census), Stephanie Cronen (AIR), Harley Frazis (BLS), Lisa Hudson (NCES), Bob Kominski (Census), Kashka Kubzdela (NCES), Shelly Martinez (OMB), Jon O'Bergh (OUS-ED), Jessie Rothstein (CEA), Matthew Soldner (NCES), Marie Stetser (NCES), Tom Weko (NCES)

1. General announcements
 - a. Jesse Rothstein is rotating out of his position at CEA but is taking on a new responsibility: Chief Economist at the Department of Labor.
 - b. He introduced his colleague (and presumptive replacement), Liz Ananat, indicating that he will remain in the loop to the extent possible.
2. Cognitive interviews
 - a. Cognitive interviews for certificates will begin next week.
 - i. A schedule of their timing will be sent out and all are invited to listen in.
 - ii. Once the schedule is released, members should indicate if they are interested in monitoring a call.
 - b. Five group members indicated that they had listened in on cognitive interviews for certifications.
 - c. One member indicated that the interviews confirmed two things:
 - i. People who have certifications know that they do, and they call them certifications.
 - ii. Those who do not tend to use "messy" language to describe their credentials. A particular concern arose in the case of a health care professional who did not appear to be making a distinction between a certification and a license, focusing only on the latter.
 - d. A member noted, however, that most people appeared to make a distinction between their certifications and their academic attainment. She also indicated that she saw little evidence of a mode effect: people seemed just as able via phone to respond to our questions as they did in person.
 - e. A final report from Shugoll concerning the cognitive interviews will arrive on or about the second week of May. Panelists will be invited to comment, if they so desire.
3. Licensure, certification, and attainment
 - a. A general discussion ensued about the importance of segmenting licensure, certification, and attainment.
 - b. There was consensus that while there may be little analytic difference between a certification and a license, the problem is more acute when attempting to distinguish between an educational credential (a certificate) and a non-educational one (a certification or license).
 - c. To further explore this issue, we will do the following:
 - i. Seek guidance from labor market experts about whether there is a practical difference between a license and a certification
 - ii. Consider seeding the pilot with known certification holders, known license holders, and known holders of both, and comparing their responses

4. Pilot test plans

a. Group members were reminded that September is a hard date for beginning the pilot and began a discussion regarding several key facets of the pilot methodology:

i. CAPI versus CATI interviews

a) The recommendation is that the pilot be telephone only (CATI), without the use of field interviewers (CAPI). Westat, the data collection contractor for the pilot, has recommended that we employ a two-stage design:

- 1) In the first phase, we will send out a comparatively large number of mailout/mailback “screeners” as a mechanism to identify an adult in the household and get his/her phone number.
- 2) In the second phase, we will sample one adult from each household who meet to be determined eligibility criteria (if any) and conduct the extended pilot CATI interview.

b) This approach was recommended over RDD, which they believe would have serious undercoverage in a focal population (21 to 40) that is likely to not have landlines.

- 1) There was a suggestion to consider an RDD landline + mobile phone frame. Please see the communication below about this issue.
- 2) This approach may yield response rates below NCES and OMB standards.
- 3) However, this is viewed to be acceptable because we do not anticipate substantial response bias and do not intend to generate or share national estimates derived from this process. The primary goal is gathering sufficient sample for key subgroups.

a) All partners concur that the results of the pilot are not official statistics and will not be released as such, but will only be used to document the pilot study. This is a feasibility study only, and should not be construed otherwise, no matter how interesting the results.

ii. The screener/frame builder

a) The group consensus was that because most people won't be screened in or out by virtue of the screener, it is misnamed.

- 1) Instead, we should think of it as a “household enumeration.”
- 2) It is important to remember that the household enumeration form that was shared with the group was just a mock-up. It is *not* real.

iii. Collaborations with NHES

a) As it happens, NHES is also getting ready to release two versions of a screener for their upcoming study: one that is a child enumeration screener, and another that is a so-called “engaging screener” that is going to have a series of questions.

b) This engaging screener could be used as a place for us to insert some of our pilot questions. Then, we could possibly follow up with respondents via CATI, getting some sense as to items' test-retest reliabilities.

iv. Key subgroups

a) While we intend to involve respondents from a wide range of backgrounds, the initial memo presented identifies three key analyses we're interested in:

- 1) Those that describe the variability and characteristics of the credentials of respondents between the age of 21 and 40
- 2) Those that describe the variability and characteristics of the credentials of respondents who have a level of education below the sub-baccalaureate

- 3) Those that will allow us to investigate “bin [discriminating] factors” between certificates and certifications
- b) Panelists suggested that the sample be stratified on several factors, including age (with an emphasis on those between the ages of 18 and 45), race (perhaps at a more gross level than would ordinarily be acceptable by federal standards, given the pilot nature of this study, such as White, non-Hispanic, Hispanic, and other non-Hispanic), and attainment (with special emphasis on the lower end, including non-HS graduates, HS graduate only, associates, some college, and baccalaureate and above).
- c) Panelists also suggested that there might be merit in developing a sampling design that was sensitive to occupation. This was, however, presented as a secondary concern.
- v. Multiple credentials and reference period
 - a) A discussion ensued about how to handle respondents who have multiple relevant credentials, and how narrowly tailored the reference period should be.
 - b) A general consensus emerged that although we wanted to collect gross data (i.e., what it is, when it was earned, and whether it was work related) on up to three credentials, we would focus on the “one [that] is most important to you in your work life.”
 - c) Because this does not (necessarily) solve the reference period problem, it was suggested that the initial lead might be “tell us about the three most recent work-related credentials” a respondent had earned. This may not be enough to solve problems associated with stackable certificates.
- vi. Experiments
 - a) Three experiments are included in the pilot.
 - b) Will not conduct a reliability study on proxy response; and instead will estimate measurement error by the percentage of “don’t know” proxy responses.
 - c) To evaluate order effects, the location of educational attainment items may vary in the pilot instrument.
 - d) Finally, intend to use a seeded sample of known certificate, certification, and licensure holders so that their “actual” data can be compared to their pilot responses.
- vii. Spanish language pilot instrument
 - a) It was the consensus of the group that a Spanish language version of the pilot instrument will not be created.
- viii. Survey name
 - a) Currently, the pilot is referred to as the “Adult Training and Education Survey.”
 - b) Members were asked to submit ideas for a better name.

5. The next meeting will be held on May 11, 2010.

Interagency Working Group on Certificates and Certifications
Meeting Minutes
March 9, 2010

Present

Stacey Bielick (AIR), Sharon Boivin (NCES), Sarah Crissey (Census), Stephanie Cronen (AIR), Harley Frazis (BLS), Sarena Goodman (CEA), Lisa Hudson (NCES), Bob Kominski (Census), Kashka Kubzdela (NCES), Shelly Martinez (OMB), Tom Nardone (BLS), Jon O’Bergh (OUS-ED), Janice Plotczyk (NCES), Jessie Rothstein (CEA), Matthew Soldner (NCES), Tom Weko (NCES)

1. Updates about the progress of certification cognitive interviews
 - a. Two interviews have been held to date, both led by Shugoll Research.
 - b. Generally, both went well.
 - c. The first debriefing meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 10, so that minor adjustments to the protocol can be made.
2. Review of proposed certificates cognitive interview protocol
 - a. The conversation began with a discussion aimed at “orienting” the interview to one of three perspectives:
 - i. We might begin by asking about anything that a respondent might call a certificate. Then, we could ask questions to help us filter out those in which we are not interested.
 - ii. We might begin by asking about only certificates that are given by “educational institutions” of all sorts.
 - iii. We might begin by asking about only certificates that respondents felt had some sort of labor market value, ignoring all others.
 - b. A consensus emerged in support of using the broadest possible “net” to capture certificates, knowing that we will ultimately have to identify the questions that analysts are most likely to want to use to narrow the field to those that fit their unique analytic need. The “big net” approach also allows us to generate something of a false-positive rate.
 - c. It was pointed out that the interview began with a task asking respondents to indicate their current attainment level, per the current ACS question, thereby priming respondents and limiting the “big net” from the start. A discussion ensued, and the resulting conclusion was that *some* priming was acceptable.
 - i. The question will be moved to the end of the interview.
 - ii. The introductory question will be something like “Have you taken any education or training to earn a certificate?”
3. Discussion of each category of questions on the potential protocol
 - a. When the group reached questions related to “why did you take this training/get this certificate,” they discussed whether respondents who indicated the purpose was primarily for leisure should be asked about other, more vocationally relevant certificates, if they existed.
 - i. A consensus emerged that we should begin by asking basic information about respondents’ most recent certificate.
 - ii. If respondents later indicated that the most recent certificate was earned primarily for leisure purposes, we would attempt to probe for an additional certificate that had labor market value and recycle through the interview with that certificate as the focus.

- b. After completing the interview for a workforce-relevant certificate (if one was taken), respondents would be asked a similar set of questions about “other training” they had received and, finally, if there was time, we would ask about any certificates they had held. In this way, we can maximize our time with respondents.
 - c. The group noted that one question—whether the certificate was recognized by other employers—had been left off the protocol. It will be reinstated.
 - d. The group also wanted to ensure that a question to the effect of “how do you think about your certificate in relation to your educational attainment” was included.
 - e. Everyone’s feedback will be incorporated and a new version of the protocol will be released via electronic mail. It will need to be finalized before the next meeting, so members were urged to weigh in electronically if they wished to do so.
 - f. The group asked whether the feedback loop being used to make on-the-fly modifications to the certifications interviews will also be used for the certificates interviews and was informed that it will.
4. Discussion of documents
 - a. IWG panelists were to send any feedback on the annotated bibliography no later than March 22.
 - b. Shugoll Research’s final report on the focus groups will be sent to the group.
 5. Discussion of likely timeframe for the pilot
 - a. The group was advised that the pilot will need to be in the field in September, immediately after the Census moratorium lifts.
 - b. This leaves late spring or early summer for serious item development.
 6. The next meeting will be held on April 6.

Interagency Working Group on Certificates and Certifications
Meeting Minutes
February 19, 2010

Present

Stacey Bielick (AIR), Sharon Boivin (NCES), Chris Chapman (NCES), Harley Frazis (BLS), Bob Kominski (Census), Kashka Kubzdela (NCES), Shelly Martinez (OMB), Tom Nardone (BLS), Jon O'Bergh (OUS-ED), Jessie Rothstein (CEA), Matthew Soldner (AIR), Tom Weko (NCES)

1. Update on activities since last meeting
 - a. Printed copies of materials shared prior to the meeting, including the Focus Group report developed by Shugoll Research, were distributed.
 - b. Members were asked to review the report and, if they have comments, provide them no later than February 23, 2010.

2. Discussion related to upcoming cognitive interviews
 - a. Members suggested that for the sake of gathering the cleanest possible data, cognitive interviews for certificates and certifications be split.
 - i. Cognitive interviews (CIs) for certifications will occur first (clearance on or about 2/24/2010 for interviews between 2/26/2010 through 4/16/2010), followed by those for certificates (clearance on or about 3/26/2010 for interviews between 3/31/2010 through 5/7/2010). The rationale for starting with certifications is that we seem to know less about these (overall) than we do about certificates.
 - ii. Some CIs will be in person at Shugoll in Bethesda; others will be on the phone.
 - iii. IWG members are invited to observe either.
 - b. Working group members raised a concern that people in the DC Metro area may not be representative of the population at large.
 - i. The group was advised that while in-person interviews will be local, phone interviews will also take place in the South and Midwest, conducted by Shugoll business partners.
 - ii. We are currently seeking clearance for 20 CIs with a provision for another 20 CIs if saturation is not attained. If the process unfolds in a way that suggests more regional variation exists than is anticipated and we feel the need to field more CIs in outlying areas, we can do so.
 - c. Working group members asked about the communication plan throughout the CI process.
 - i. Shugoll can do whatever IWG members prefer.
 - ii. The consensus was that after every fifth interview, there should be an opportunity to brief IWG members on what is being found to allow multiple "course corrections" throughout the process.
 - iii. While we still expect a final written report summarizing the CI process, no interim written documentation is required.
 - iv. A group member will work with Shugoll to implement the feedback plan and advise IWG members of details as they are finalized.

3. MPR literature review
 - a. The group contracted with MPR Associates, Inc., to extend the earlier Certificates & Certifications literature review that had been generated as part of the work product of the previous interagency working group who addressed this topic.
 - i. The literature review was circulated for comment.

- ii. IWG members will be notified when the window for comments is beginning to close.
 - iii. A group member will work with MPR to finalize the document.
4. Brainstorming on certificates
- a. IWG members may recall that prior to the development of the CI for certifications, we reviewed written materials (i.e., from the Brookings meeting) and held a discussion related to the “definition” of a certification, including its salient features or distinguishing characteristics. That same process unfolded vis-à-vis certificates.
 - i. Context
 - a) We are grappling with three concepts embedded in the larger picture of “credentials related to work”: licensure, certifications, and certificates. Each has some degree of overlap with the other two.
 - 1) Licensure is relatively well defined.
 - 2) We have made solid headway toward understanding certification.
 - 3) Certificates are our new focus.
 - ii. Certificates
 - a) These are a somewhat unwieldy set of credentials.
 - b) We have good data on educational certificates awarded by Title IV (financial aid participating) postsecondary institutions that result from credit-bearing instruction through IPEDS.
 - c) What is beyond that universe, however, is somewhat of a mystery.
 - d) The count of providers in that universe may be a third again as large as what IPEDS estimates (~ 6,700 institutions), but the share of enrollment/conferral is relatively small (~10 percent), as non-Title IV participants are likely in the position due to their small size and lack of resources.
 - iii. Narrowing the field of certificates
 - a) In the grand scheme, our goal is to distinguish between certificates that “matter” and those that do not, enumerate the ones that matter, and, ultimately, identify meaningful correlates.
 - b) Members of the IWG expressed some consensus that a certificate “mattered” if, *ex ante*, its recipient anticipated it would have labor market value.
 - b. IWG members generated a list of probes related to holding a certificate they felt might be appropriate for inclusion in cognitive interviews:
 - i. The level of effort required to attain the certificate
 - ii. Perceived potential labor market value of earning the certificate
 - iii. Utility, which was defined primarily in terms of labor market value but, for some, included nonpecuniary components
 - iv. The certificate’s provider
 - v. The tasks associated with earning the certificate
 - vi. The certificate’s field
 - vii. Whether the certificate would be recognized by others (e.g., employers, peers) as “meaningful,” presumably vis-à-vis employability
 - viii. Prerequisites for earning the certificate
 - ix. Whether the certificate was required for employment
 - x. The interaction between the certificate and other credentials (i.e., issues of sequencing)
 - xi. The occupational specificity of the certificate (e.g., PMP vs. HVAC)

- xii. Whether the certificate was in the same field as the holder's other educational credentials, if any
 - c. Two group members will look at the above list and begin to develop the CI protocol for certificates.
- 5. The next IWG meeting will be held on March 9.

Interagency Working Group on Certificates and Certifications
Meeting Minutes
January 12, 2010

Present

Stacey Bielick (AIR), Sharon Boivin (NCES), Sarah Crissey (Census), Harley Frazis (BLS), Sarena Goodman (CEA), Lisa Hudson (NCES), Bob Kominski (Census), Kashka Kubzdela (NCES), Shelly Martinez (OMB), Tom Nardone (BLS), Matthew Soldner (AIR), Tom Weko (NCES)

1. Update on activities since last meeting
 - a. Shugoll Research completed the focus groups.
 - b. More detail about this and other activities can be found below.
2. Focus group review and discussion
 - a. IWG members updated the entire group about the recently completed focus groups.
 - i. As a reminder, three groups were held in mid-December: (a) two that targeted individuals who were certificate/certification holders and (b) one that was a “hodge-podge” of individuals who did not hold certifications but expressed an interest in attaining one or more credentials.
 - ii. Those IWG members who attended the focus groups offered several observations:
 - a) We were impressed with the professionalism demonstrated by Shugoll Research, including the quality of the research facility and the skilled facilitation of the groups.
 - b) Generally, individuals who held licenses (i.e., state-issued “permissions to practice”), certifications (i.e., industry-recognized credentials), and certificates (i.e., educational awards and non-educational certificates of completion) used the same kind of language as IWG members to describe their credentials.
 - c) There appeared to be low rates of false positives (i.e., people who thought they had credentials of interest but likely did not) and false negatives (i.e., people whom we would have described as having a credential but did not think they did).
 - d) Individuals in the IT field were particularly able to identify their specific certifications. From their discussion, an important issue was raised: Certifications expire, but may have residual labor market value because they provided *prior* access to employment or promotions. This is a potential problem for enumeration (how large ought the reference period be?) and analysis.
 - e) Individuals in the health field were easily able to identify their licenses but they were less clear about their certifications and certificates.
 - f) Some participants had difficulty recalling the length of time it took them to earn a given credential, particularly if had been earned some time ago.
 - g) Some participants had difficulty characterizing whether the provider of the education or training they completed while earning their certificate or certification was an “educational institution.”
 - h) Some in the panel felt that the disciplinary mix of participants were a bit narrow, particularly in the skilled trades. This domain should receive attention in the cognitive testing phase.

- b. We have received a draft report from Shugoll Research, distributed to the group.
 - i. ESSI staff will review the draft and provide Shugoll the first round of feedback (including requesting a change to manuscript format).
 - ii. The first revision will be shared with the entire panel, who is invited to offer further comment.

- 3. Key decisions for item design and cognitive testing
 - a. The group reached agreement on key indicators that define a relevant credential.
 - i. Informally, the group has articulated a set of indicators that define a certification:
 - a) Issued after successfully passing a test
 - b) Time-limited
 - c) Revocable for malfeasance
 - ii. The group concurred these indicators are relevant.
 - b. Group members discussed the possible universe of qualifications of possible interest.
 - i. Some things seem clearly in-bounds (e.g., Microsoft Certified Systems Engineers), while others seem peripheral (e.g., CPR certification).
 - ii. The consensus of the group was that at least as we move through cognitive testing, we employ a maximally inclusive definition for qualifications. While this may temporarily introduce noise into our work, it may also help us identify potential blind spots (e.g., how do we capture licenses given to tradespeople, who may have had non-traditional educational routes).
 - iii. As we consider sampling for the cognitive interviewing (and beyond), we should consider all potential respondents as falling in to one of four quadrants, defined by a two-by-two matrix:
 - a) Has relevant credential vs. does not have relevant credential
 - b) Has educational “stuff” with labor market value vs. does not have “stuff”
 - iv. People who have a credential and have “stuff” are a key focus but not inherently problematic. Such is also the case for people who don’t have a credential and don’t have “stuff.”
 - v. The possible false positives (report a credential but no “stuff”) and possible false negatives (no credentials but “stuff”) present conceptual, measurement, and analytic issues.
 - vi. Cognitive interviews should help elicit information that will probe for each of the four quadrants.
 - c. Do we enumerate all or only most recent qualifications?
 - i. For now, the cognitive testing should seek to enumerate all qualifications.
 - ii. We may elect to constrain the reference period at some point, or, as the item is integrated in to one or more surveys through piloting, the respondent may self-censor (e.g., if the question is couched in the “employment” section of a survey, the person may only include things that, in their view, have a present impact on their employability).
 - d. How many items do we want to ask beyond those necessary for enumeration?
 - i. Several framing and filtering issues were raised by group members:
 - a) Length of time required to earn
 - b) Method of instruction (e.g., classes, self-study, or on-the-job training)
 - c) Associated costs or fees
 - ii. These should be included, and IWG members were encouraged to send additional questions via e-mail.
 - iii. Others raised issues that are likely to be particularly well suited to later NCES research studies (e.g., why did you pursue this training or education?).

- iv. IWG panelists suggested that the current NHES may have items that prove valuable in this regard.
 - e. The issue of concluding the interview with the current CPS educational attainment item was raised, following up with a “tell me why you chose what you chose” probe. The group concurred this should be included in the interview.
 - f. Do we want to consider certificates at this time?
 - i. The group concurred that, to the extent possible, we should attempt to gather information on educational certificates. This is an area of conceptual “messiness” and this will help us understand that messiness more fully.
 - ii. Additional framing questions related to certificates should be sent via e-mail.
 - g. Group talked at length about proxy reporting.
 - i. The group concurred that the cognitive interview should conclude with “How confident are you that you can answer these same questions about people living in your household?”
 - ii. If possible, we should try to get the other household respondent on the phone to answer some of the questions.
4. Discussion of pilot test
- a. Discussion began with initial pilot test considerations.
 - i. Sampling
 - a) The group concurred that a nationally representative frame is desirable.
 - b) A group member is collaborating with a national accreditor of certifying agencies to gain access to a potential sample of those with certifications.
 - c) This will be augmented with a wholly random subsample.
 - d) Anticipated subanalyses by race and age group are anticipated, and so the sampling strategy should be appropriately adjusted.
 - e) Panelists were asked to submit suggestions for other subanalyses.
 - ii. Reporting error/reliability/validity.
 - a) We may be able to conduct some validity testing.
 - b) Two domains seem particularly fruitful:
 - 1) Verification of those reporting licenses against appropriate state data systems
 - 2) Collaboration with certifiers to check those reporting certifications against grantor rolls.
 - iii. Mode
 - a) Panelists concurred that the majority of interviews could be conducted via phone.
 - b) In-person interviews are still valuable because they would permit additional probing.
 - c) Mail-out/mail-back instruments should also be considered.
 - iv. Instrumentation
 - a) The pilot test will appear on its own, stand-alone instrument.
 - b) The ability to test order effects at this stage is not a priority.
 - v. Coverage
 - a) The group concluded that we have little useful information on control totals.
 - b) As such, assessing coverage and nonresponse bias will be difficult.

- b. Panelists were advised to consider the pilot we are currently planning as the first of several.
 - i. After this pilot, it is likely that we will seek to incorporate questions on several existing vehicles as appropriate, such as interviews targeted to retiring CPS sample members or SIPP topical modules.
 - ii. Only after we have experience with these new questions in a pseudo-production environment are they likely to move to full-scale use in the core instrument.

- 5. Review of revised timeline and any necessary changes
 - a. The group was advised that the timeline distributed in advance of the meeting requires revision. The needed changes will be made and sent out to IWG members.

Interagency Working Group on Certificates and Certifications
Meeting Minutes
December 8, 2009

Present

Dori Allard (BLS), Stacey Bielick (AIR), Sharon Boivin (NCES), Sarah Crissey (Census), Sandy Eyster (AIR), Harley Frazis (BLS), Lisa Hudson (NCES), Bob Kominski (Census), Kashka Kubzdela (NCES), Shelly Martinez (OMB), Tom Nardone (BLS), Jon O’Bergh (OUS-ED), Jessie Rothstein (CEA), Tom Weko (NCES)

1. Introductions
2. Review of draft timeline (distributed via e-mail, 12/7/2009)
 - a. Work to date is on schedule, including the development of initial focus group protocol (including IAWG member feedback) that was approved as part of OMB Package (1850-0803).
 - b. Focus groups are being held 12/17/2009 and 12/18/2009. A formal report will be completed by mid-January.
 - c. The draft schedule calls for cognitive interviewing of potential items mid-January, with preliminary plans for a pilot test in early April.
 - d. Due dates will be added for working group members’ feedback to various deliverables to the schedule.
3. Discussion of schedule adjustments
 - a. Suggestion to add at least one additional week for item development between focus groups and cognitive interviews.
 - b. We may be underestimating the level of uncertainty that will remain about items/item sets even as we move to pilot testing. It may be that two rounds of cognitive interviewing are needed, or that the pilot test plan will need to include a method of evaluating multiple item sets the group is considering.
 - c. Reminder that cognitive interviewing is iterative—the 40 planned interviews could be grouped into four rounds of ten participants, with various refinements made between each round as we move to “ideal” items.
4. Review of preliminary focus group plans
 - a. Focus groups commence next week (12/17–12/18/2009) and are being organized by a local market research firm.
 - b. All participants will have educational attainment above the HS diploma but below the baccalaureate and will be between the ages of 21 and 40.
 - c. All participants will be drawn from the firm’s in-house database of ~10K potential respondents.
 - d. Three focus groups of ~12 participants will be held:
 - i. Two homogeneous groups where participants are likely to have certifications. Four disciplines will be targeted: (a) IT, (b) construction, (c) business, and (d) health.
 - ii. One heterogeneous group of individuals who could have any combination of certifications, certificates, or licenses, serving as the “control group.”

- e. All focus groups can be observed by working group members, and members are strongly encouraged attend.
 - i. December 17 at 6 p.m. and 8 p.m.
 - ii. December 18 at noon
- 5. Discussion of several questions raised related to the cognitive interviews scheduled to be held after mid-December's focus groups
 - a. Individuals with a wider range of educational attainment should be included in cognitive interviews. It was confirmed that this was the intention.
 - b. It was confirmed that the same vendor will conduct the cognitive interviews and the focus groups.
 - c. The planned mode for cognitive interviews was CATI, and the group was asked for their feedback.
 - i. There was an initial preference for in-person interviews, and it was asked why CATI interviews had been initially specified.
 - ii. CATI had been selected for various efficiencies (time and cost) and to allow a national sample.
 - iii. One member stated a preference for a plan that used CATI first to get a sense of how questions were working, and then move to in-person interviews to get additional information as needed.
 - iv. Different incentive strategies would be appropriate for the two modes.
- 6. Review of pilot testing
 - a. Three considerations related to the development of the pilot test were raised:
 - i. Its mode, which ideally would be comparable to the full-scale vehicle (i.e., CPS or SIPP)
 - ii. Item-ordering effects
 - iii. Test-retest reliability
 - b. Members of the working group raised several concerns related to pilot testing.
 - i. One member raised the issue of proxy respondents, and the reliability of data obtained by interviewing household members who might have incomplete knowledge of others' attainment histories.
 - ii. The consensus of the group was that a mechanism for assessing the extent of the proxy problem should be developed.
 - iii. In cognitive interviewing, some preliminary data on respondents' estimation capacity can be gleaned, but it will be insufficient: The true test belongs in the pilot.
 - iv. One member suggested that a subsample of pilot respondents should be identified for subsequent follow-up ("a proxy in your household told us you had ... what do you REALLY have ...").
 - c. Issues were raised surrounding the appropriate pilot vehicles. Three were most salient:
 - i. The identification of a vehicle that is contextually similar to CPS or SIPP so that the results are valid
 - ii. The identification of a practical pilot mode
 - iii. A moratorium on household surveys between April 2010 and August 2010, due to the decennial census
 - d. Several members spoke about the strengths and weaknesses of using outgoing CPS respondents for the pilot.
 - i. On balance, this route would not likely yield sufficient n , as prior studies that have taken this route typically survey only ~150 households, and we would prefer >1000 respondents.

- e. There was discussion of both NHES and NCVS.
 - i. NHES will likely be out of the field by April.
 - ii. NCVS is a decidedly different context.
 - iii. It might be possible to “piggyback” on a nonfederal survey but there were concerns about response rates and data quality.
 - iv. To ensure proper context and sample size, the best option may involve NCES contracting with a vendor to do its own independent pilot.
 - f. One member raised the issue of the pilot test’s mode.
 - i. Although the full-scale will likely be administered in person using CAPI (with subsequent CATI updates), getting the pilot in CAPI- or CATI-ready form by April seems unlikely.
 - ii. As such, it was suggested that the paper and pencil instrumentation will likely need to be developed.
 - g. The issue of a household survey moratorium between March 1, 2010, and August 30, 2010, due to the Decennial Census was raised.
 - i. Absent a waiver (rare), no household surveys will be allowed to field while the Census is in its production phase.
 - ii. One member raised the option of using the outgoing CPS sample to do preliminary work in April, but then fielding a larger pilot in September.
 - iii. One member questioned whether any useful information would be gained from the CPS follow-up and suggested putting the emphasis on a full September pilot.
 - iv. OMB and BLS staff will talk with their peers to determine whether the split-pilot approach would even be feasible. More information would likely be needed before OIRA could make a decision.
 - v. One member asked what the household survey moratorium and a possible September 2010 fielding would mean for data availability from the full-scale. It was believed that data would still be available by end of 2012.
7. The “Big Picture”
- a. The meeting concluded by reviewing a diagram depicting the concepts under investigation as part of this work.
 - i. It begins by drawing a distinction between certificates and certification, and then considers their
 - a) Enumeration, including
 - 1) Stock and
 - 2) Flow
 - b) Correlates, including those related to
 - 1) Employers,
 - 2) Providers, and
 - 3) Individuals’
 - (a) Social,
 - (b) Economic, and
 - (c) Educational Conditions
 - b. Some members questioned whether the division between certificates and certifications is “real,” at least in the mind of respondents.
 - i. A follow-up comment indicated that there is currently no “magic word” for identifying the thing or things we are interested in measuring.
 - ii. Instead, one member noted, we want to identify credentials that allow individuals to get good jobs, make a living wage, etc.

8. The second Tuesday of each month has been identified as this group's regular meeting time. The next meeting will be held on January 12, 2010.