

# The Consumer Expenditure Survey's New Design and Implementation Plans

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FCSM

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# Outline

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1. Gemini Project to Redesign CE
  - a. Background
  - b. Redesign
  - c. Road Ahead

# BACKGROUND

# Current CE Design

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## Interview

- 5 waves of personal interviews
- 3 month recall
- Large or recurring expenditures

## Diary

- 2 one-week household paper diaries
- Contemporaneous recall
- Small, frequently purchased items

**Consumer Expenditure  
Survey Estimates**

# Redesign Motivation

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- Evidence of measurement error
- Changes in technology and spending behaviors
- Need for greater operational flexibility
- High level of burden – linked to data quality

# Redesign Objectives

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- Verifiable reduction in measurement error, with a particular focus on underreporting
- Reduction in burden

# Data Requirements

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- Annual expenditure estimates of total household spending for the US population
- Month of expenditure(s) for each expenditure category
- Data collected at a minimum of two points in time, one year apart
- Minimum set of expenditure/non-expenditure data elements from each household

# Required level of detail

*Current Design –*



**\$41.61**



**\$26.74**



**\$43.81**



**\$109.19**



**\$39.95**

*Redesign –*



**\$261.29**

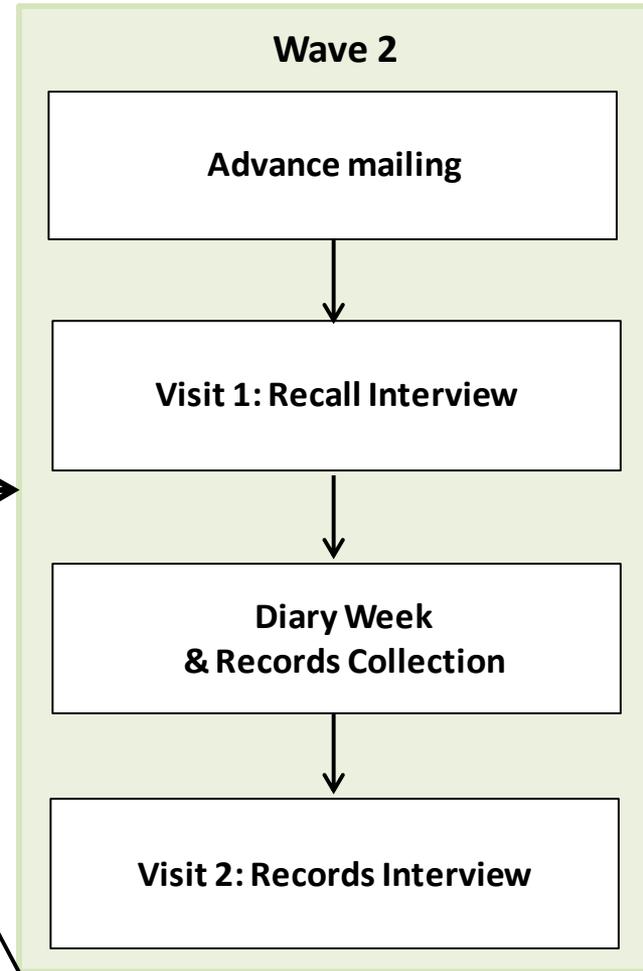
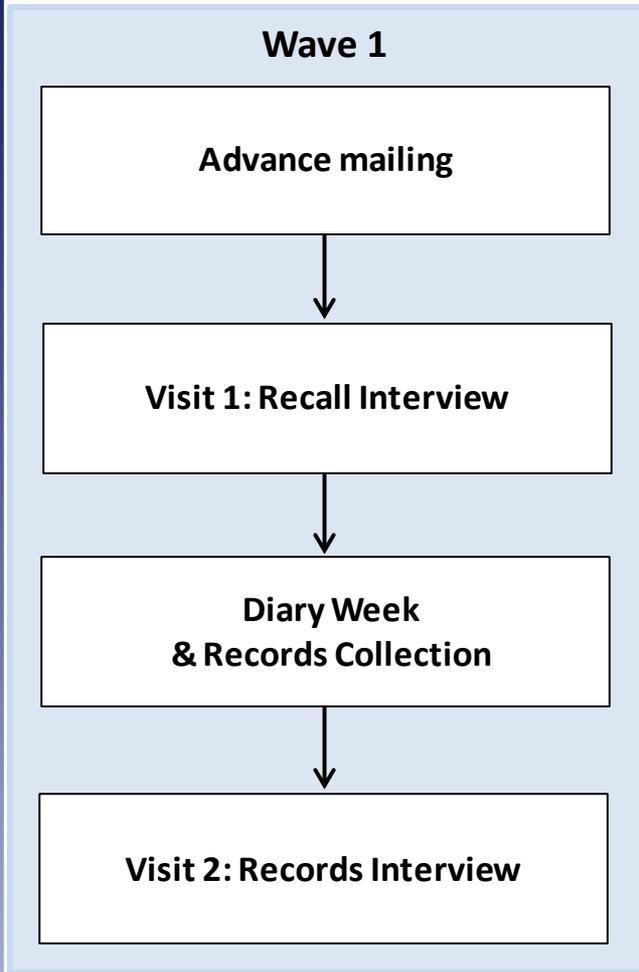
# Key Proposal Inputs

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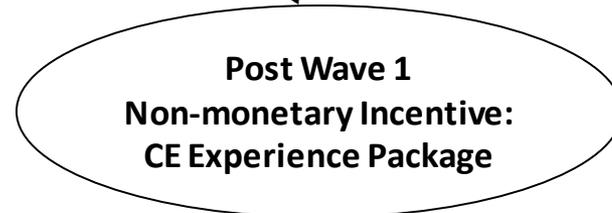
CE relied on several sources for proposal inputs:

- Expert panels
- External discussion events
- Ongoing research on key topics
- National Academies' Committee on National Statistics (CNSTAT)
- Westat independent proposal
- Census staff and Field Representative (FR) input

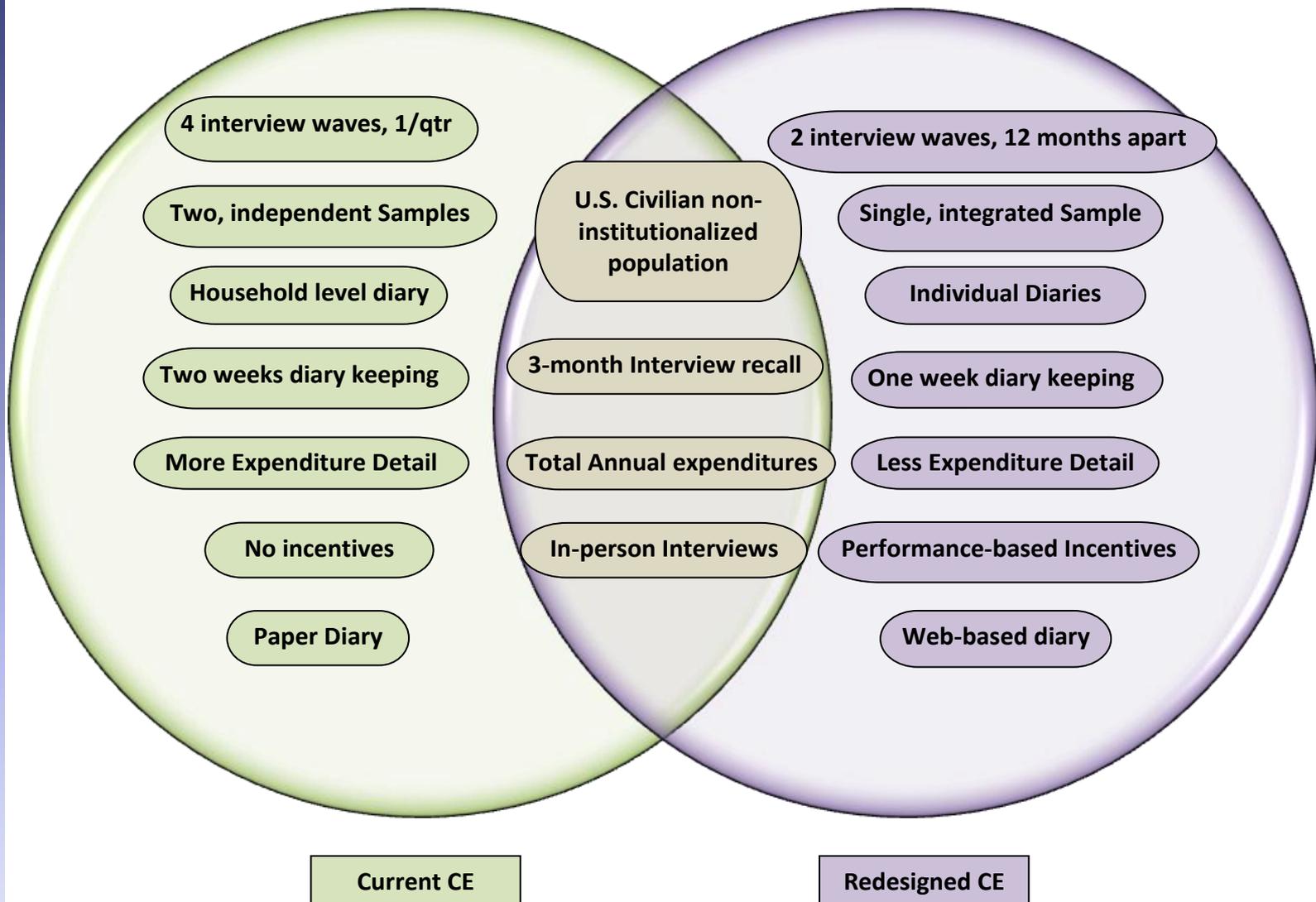
# DESIGN PROPOSAL



**12 months  
between waves**



# Comparison of Design Features



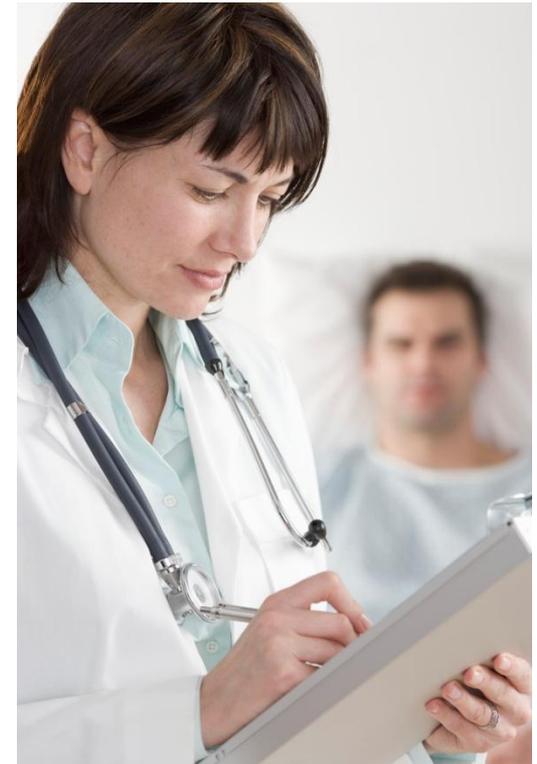
# WAVE 1

# Visit 1: Personal Interview

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# Visit 1: Recall-based expenditures



# Visit 1: Training



# Visit 1: Incentive

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# Diary Week

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# Diary: Content



# Diary Week: Incentive(s)



# Visit 2: Personal Interview



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# Visit 2: Records-based expenditures



| STUB SAMPLES INC.<br>4891 INGLESIDE DRIVE<br>HUNTINGTON BEACH CA 92649 |                    |                    |                |   |   | Earnings Statement                            |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|----------------|---|---|---|
| EMPLOYEE NO.   | EMPLOYEE NAME      | SOCIAL SECURITY NO | PERIOD BEG.    | PERIOD END  | CHECK DATE                                |   |
| 045345   | JOHN J. DOE        | xxx-xx-9898        | 01/18/2011     | 02/01/2011  | 02/04/2011                                |   |
| EARNINGS   | HOURS              | RATE               | CURRENT AMOUNT | WITHOLDINGS/ DEDUCTIONS   | CURRENT AMOUNT                            | YEAR TO DATE                                  |
| REGULAR PAY  | 87.60              |                    | 2307.69        | STATE TAX AMT<br>DEFERRED CMP<br>FED TAX AMT<br>HI TAX<br>OASDI | 87.69<br>0.00<br>281.54<br>33.46<br>96.92 | 350.77<br>0.00<br>1126.15<br>133.85<br>387.69 |
| CURRENT AMOUNT   | CURRENT DEDUCTIONS | NET PAY            | YTD EARNINGS   | YTD DEDUCTIONS  | YTD NET PAY                               | CHECK NO.                                     |
| 2307.69  | 499.62             | 1808.08            | 9230.77        | 1998.46   | 7232.31                                   | 48974   |

# Visit 2: Incentive



# WAVE 2

# Design Overview: Wave 2

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# Design Overview: Future Research & Decisions

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Topics addressed during development:

- Wave 1 and 2 topics:
  - Incentive amounts and structure
  - Exact survey content (records vs. recall)
  - Use of records as data input
  - Length of Wave 1 and Wave 2 visits
- Diary topics:
  - Acceptance of annotated grocery receipts
- Other topics:
  - When the experience package will be sent

# Development & Implementation Timeline

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## Design Proposal and Planning

- ▶ Approved redesign proposal released (July 2013)
- ▶ User impact of redesign (July-December 2013)
- ▶ Roadmap developed (September 2013)

## Field Tests (Develop, Field, Analyze)

- ▶ Individual and Web Diaries (2012-14)
- ▶ Proof-of-Concept Test (2015)
- ▶ Large-Scale Feasibility Test (2018)
- ▶ Dress Rehearsal (2021)
- ▶ Implementation (2023)

# Design Features Recommended by CNSTAT

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- One sample design
- Modular design with a core survey
- Increased use of technology, especially to encourage 'in the moment' reporting
- Increased use of records
- Reduced proxy reporting
- Mixed mode data collection
- Large incentives

# Design Features Recommended by Westat

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- One sample design
- Two or three waves of data collection
- Individual diaries
- Use of a web-based diary to allow respondents to enter data via their Smart Phone, tablet or home PC
- Monitoring of incoming diary data during reporting periods with potential interviewer interventions
- Increased use of records
- Use of respondent-level incentives

# Design Overview: Major Issues Addressed

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1. Incentives → addresses respondent motivation
2. Technology → encourages real-time data capture
3. Individual diaries → reduces proxy reporting
4. Shortened interview length, reduced survey content, and increased record use → improve data quality

# Design Team (past and present)

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- Kathy Downey, formerly Bureau of Labor Statistics
- Jennifer Edgar, Bureau of Labor Statistics
- Dawn V. Nelson, U.S. Census Bureau
- Laura Paszkiewicz, Bureau of Labor Statistics
- Adam Safir, Bureau of Labor Statistics

# Contact Information

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