

The Web-enabled QSPBI Questionnaire

I. Introduction

The present delivery and collection of questionnaires for establishments-based surveys of the National Statistics Office (NSO), in particular for the Quarterly Survey of Philippine Business and Industry (QSPBI), is **done** by NSO field staff. The process is a highly labor-intensive operation. Over the years, **however**, the low level of response rate (40 percent to 60 percent) during the submissions of preliminary quarterly results to the National Statistical and Coordination Board (NSCB) continue to beset the survey.

Considering that the QSPBI is a designated statistics and its results are critical inputs in the estimation of the national accounts, there is a need to improve the response rates , as well as, the easy validation of results. Although the physical presence of an NSO representative is likely to elicit higher levels of cooperation and response, a quicker method of **questionnaire retrieval and** data collection is demanded by users.

The concern is articulated in the NSO FYDP 2004 – 2008 where it addresses the problem of improving the timeliness and quality of industry statistics by increasing the response rate to at least 80 percent for QSPBI, 45 days after the reference quarter.

Among the wide range of methods available to the NSO which may contribute to increasing the response rate is through electronic means. This was among the recommendations of the project “*Improving the Annual Survey of Philippine Business and Industry of the National Statistics Office*” under the Philippines- Australia Governance Facility (PAGF) as **completed in 2002**. The options ranged from the use of the electronic questionnaire on diskette to the use of an NSO website from which establishments could “download” the questionnaire to their own computers and complete the questionnaire electronically, and “upload” the completed questionnaire back to the website.

The use of e-mails as the sending and retrieving medium for the QSPBI questionnaires was also manifested by the National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB) in the approval given for the conduct of the survey as part of its clearance process. Thus, the developmental activities on the electronic QSPBI questionnaire (e-QSPBI) can no longer be delayed. It started in the third quarter of 2005 and had transformed into the web-enabled QSPBI **questionnaire** system by July 2006.

The viability of using automatic data collection is being explored jointly by the Statistical Sampling and Operations Division (SSOD) of the Industry and Trade Statistics Department and the Information Technology Systems Research Division (ITSRD) of the Information Resources Department.

II. Objectives

The main objective of the web-enabled QSPBI questionnaire is to improve the quality of the QSPBI data. The specific objectives are :

1. to improve the response rate to the survey

The use of an NSO website from which establishments could fill-out and submit completed questionnaires on a voluntary basis and in their own-time, is encouraged. The availability of computers coupled with the advances in information technology will ensure the fast transfer of data from the sample establishments to the NSO through the identified contact persons . A minimal pressure on the establishment , in terms of reminder e-mails , will be sent to them as the deadline approaches.

2. to **reduce field operation cost** (i.e. distribution cost and callbacks on collection of the accomplished questionnaires) and **data encoding phase**

As the questionnaires will no longer be personally distributed to the respondents of the web-enabled QSPBI, **except on request**, distribution cost for these samples will practically be zero. Personal callbacks, however, may still be resorted to - in cases where there are power outages, computers breakdown, problems with the service providers, and other causes beyond our control.

The receipt and submission of data (minus the physical questionnaire), however, would whittle away some time from the data encoding phase.

For sample establishments unwilling to provide the QSPBI data through the internet, the traditional method of personal visit to distribute and collect the questionnaires still holds.

3. to facilitate follow-up on problem reports.

Communication to the **web-based** respondents will be made easier , particularly when verifying reports for consistency and completeness. The internet will be used extensively for the purpose. The telephones and telefax machines will likewise be utilized for edit validation of submitted reports.

III. Strategies

To accomplish the objectives of the web-enabled QSPBI, the following strategies are utilized :

1. Conduct of survey on the willingness of establishments to accomplish and submit the required QSPBI information through electronic data reporting

In April 2006, in time for the first quarter round of the survey, all sample establishments (except MISSI respondents) were given an **NSO Inquiry Form on the web-based QSPBI** to accomplish. Letters were likewise sent to the Provincial Statistics Officers requesting the provincial staff to coincide the distribution of the inquiry forms during the collection of the first quarter 2006 questionnaires. Collected accomplished inquiry forms were submitted and processed at SSOD.

About 42 percent of the samples responded to the inquiry with 44 percent willing to submit QSPBI data via the internet. The number comprised 18 percent (898) of the total samples of QSPBI. There is also a strong support from medium and large sized businesses for the use of the electronic form as evidenced by the more than three-fourths (77 percent) of willing responses to the inquiry from the establishments employing 100 or more workers.

The narrative reports of the provincial offices for the first and second quarters of 2006 QSPBI affirmed this observation.

2. Construction of the frame for web-enabled QSPBI

The frame for the web-enabled QSPBI is a listing of all sample establishments in the 2006 QSPBI which signify willingness to accomplish the QSPBI questionnaires via the internet. It is limited to establishments with employment of 20 or more for all economic sectors, except those in Agriculture, Hunting and Forestry , and Fishery.

The list contains the following information:

- Name and address of establishment
- Establishment Control Number (ECN)
- Name of contact person
- Position or title of the contact person
- E-mail address of the contact person
- Establishment website
- Telephone/ telefax
- Main economic activity (MEA)
- Philippine Standard Industrial Classification (PSIC) code

Tax Identification Number of establishment (TIN)
Actual Employment (ATE)
ATE size code
Economic Organization (EO) code
Legal Organization (LO) code
Name and address of main office (if establishment is a branch or ancillary)

A total of **898** establishments will initially compose the list of possible respondents to the web-enabled QSPBI system.

3. Pilot test of the web-enabled QSPBI **Questionnaire** system

The pilot test of the web-enabled QSPBI questionnaire system will be for the third and fourth quarters of 2006 QSPBI survey rounds. Operations for the third quarter starts in October till the end of December 2006 while January to March 2007 for the fourth quarter survey.

The pilot test will be pursued in parallel with the usual method of delivering and collecting survey data from those establishments which do not have access to the internet or are unwilling to provide QSPBI data through any electronic media, along side with those willing establishments.

The pilot test is critical because this will establish the viability of the web-based facility as an alternative mode of collecting QSPBI data from sample establishments.

For the third quarter operations, letters to the establishments are attached to the addressed questionnaires of all sample establishments, regardless of the signified willingness to submit via electronic reporting. For those pre-identified respondents to the web-enabled QSPBI **questionnaire** system, e-mails will be sent in the fourth week of September 2006 informing them of the availability of the facility at the NSO website. A memorandum informing the Regional Directors, Provincial Statistics Officers and OICs on the availability of the web-enabled QSPBI is also included in the shipment of the addressed questionnaires for distribution by the field offices for the third quarter round.

Close monitoring of the receipts of data via the web-enabled facility shall be made. Feedbacking to the FOs on the status of the operations shall be observed strictly.

A re-iteration of the availability of the web-based facility shall likewise be made through letters, again, for all samples of the fourth quarter round. Willing establishments which responded to the third quarter survey will no

longer be given the physical QSPBI questionnaires, **except on request**, but will be alerted via e-mail, of the start of the collection and submission of the fourth quarter 2006 QSPBI reports.

4. Evaluation of the Pilot test and Refinement of the System

The web-enabled QSPBI **Questionnaire** system will be evaluated in terms of the security, operational and technical aspects : security, in terms of preservation of the confidentiality and access to the respondents data; technically on the compatibility of the system with the main QSPBI processing system; the accessibility to the QSPBI web using different browsers, etc... ; and operationally, as to the procedures and instructions for data submission to the web.

Data retrieved from the normal or standard data entry version or web-version should be converted and integrated into the QSPBI main processing system. A feature for uploading the QSPBI-web submitted data onto the main QSPBI processing system will be developed. Curative and preventive measures on the problems experienced during the pilot test shall likewise be installed.

Cases of more than one respondent reporting for an establishment and multi-activity enterprises will be considered .Comments and suggestions from the respondent establishments will also be inputted to the refined system to be used for the 2007 quarter rounds.

A revised implementation plan shall be prepared as a result of the evaluation of the pilot test .

The final report on the evaluation shall be prepared by the second quarter of 2007(??).

5. Maintenance of the system

For sustainability , the needed hardwares and softwares to maintain the system shall be purchased and properly maintained .

A linking with the Monitoring and Tracking System (MTS) at ITSD will be established to account for all submissions of reports via the web-based QSPBI. Improvements in the MLE (Maintenance of the List of Establishments) will take into account the requirements of the web-enabled QSPBI.

In its full implementation, motivating the respondents to continually respond to the web-based survey need to be built-in onto the system as

respondents may tire of responding to the survey. While the establishments continue to supply the required information for the QSPBI, NSO need to provide them with tokens or statistics in return for the data. **This is another dimension seen as a strategy to encourage prompt responses to the survey, which may be in the form of a summary information of the results of the survey as attachment to a letter thanking the respondent and reminding them of the next survey round.** This will have to be defined and studied for feasibility and resource provision.

IV. Workplan

The timetable of activities for the development and maintenance of the web-enabled QSPBI is shown in Table 1.