

Response to Question Received on 05/19/09 from the NAS O*NET Panel

Question: *We would like to receive a detailed breakdown of disposition code outcomes, in order to more clearly distinguish between cooperation and response rates according to AAPOR standards and definitions. The AAPOR standards and definitions are available at: <http://www.aapor.org/responseratesanoverview>*

We would like these detailed breakdowns in order to determine which group (A-D) includes the following disposition outcomes:

- > 1. Ring no answer
- > 2. Out of business (and how is that determined)
- > 3. Busy

Response:

Due to the nature and complexity of the O*NET establishment data collection, the overall cooperation rate and four stage-specific rates we provided to the Panel in the April 17 presentation are useful, sound measures that provide important information about the various facets of the establishment recruitment process. These rates are consistent with the spirit of the AAPOR standards, although this is not their primary objective. In our view, the AAPOR standards have limited applicability to the O*NET establishment recruitment process. AAPOR assumes a traditional interviewer/respondent relationship, with the objective being the completion of a one-time survey questionnaire. The O*NET establishment recruitment process is markedly different from the AAPOR model. The O*NET establishment model is a multi-stage process where business liaisons (BLs) recruit the participation of establishment points of contact (POCs) and then work with the POCs to identify and distribute questionnaires to multiple occupation incumbents at the same establishment. The BLs do not contact those individuals identified by the POCs as occupation incumbents. Instead, the BLs ask the recruited POCs to contact occupation incumbents and perform the recruitment, distribution, and follow-up activities at establishments. Given the unique aspects and complexity of the O*NET survey, the AAPOR standards do not apply directly to our design at the establishment level. The complexity of the O*NET survey requires multiple rates to provide the information necessary to ensure an efficient and competent establishment recruitment process. In the following sections we provide more detailed descriptions on our disposition categories for the various stages of O*NET data collection.

The final disposition categories for the four stages in the establishment recruitment process are as follows:

Verification

Completed – Business eligible

Completed – Business ineligible

Refused/Nonresponse (Business eligible)



Screening

Completed – SOC eligible
Completed – SOC ineligible
Business ineligible
Refused/Nonresponse (Business eligible)

Recruiting

Recruited – SOC eligible
SOC ineligible
Business ineligible
Refused/Nonresponse (Business eligible)

Sampling

Sampling completed
SOC ineligible
Business ineligible
Refused/Nonresponse (Business eligible)

The above are stage-specific final outcome categories. Before a final outcome is assigned, call outcome codes are assigned for each call attempt (or tracing attempt) made to (or about) an establishment. RTI has 33 such codes, including “Ring, No Answer” and “Busy.” Call outcome codes are recorded by the Business Liaisons (BLs) in a call history section of the Web-based Case Management System (CMS), along with accompanying notes, as appropriate.

The only call outcome codes that are also final disposition codes are those where a call results in the successful completion of the data collection stage. Business Liaisons are not permitted to code out a case as a final “business ineligible” or a final “refusal/nonresponse.” Rather, they assign a “pending business ineligible” or a “pending refusal/nonresponse” code, and then the case is automatically referred to a supervisor for review. For quality control purposes, only the supervisors can assign a final “business ineligible” or final “refusal/nonresponse” code.

In addition, cases are automatically referred to a supervisor for review after five calls have been made within a particular data collection stage without a final stage-level disposition having been reached. The supervisors review the call history and provide guidance to the BLs as appropriate. The purpose of the every-five-calls supervisory review is to help ensure that cases are being processed properly and efficiently, and to avoid having a case stagnate unnecessarily at a particular data collection stage.

The business eligibility status of an establishment is usually determined at the Verification stage (although occasionally, we discover at a later stage that an establishment that was initially thought to be business eligible is actually business



ineligible). An establishment is business eligible if (1) it is the same or a similar business as the one selected from the sampling frame and preloaded into the CMS, and (2) it is located at the sampled address. Exhibits 1 and 2, taken from the BL Manual, illustrate the application of these two criteria.

Exhibit 1. Business Eligibility Flowchart

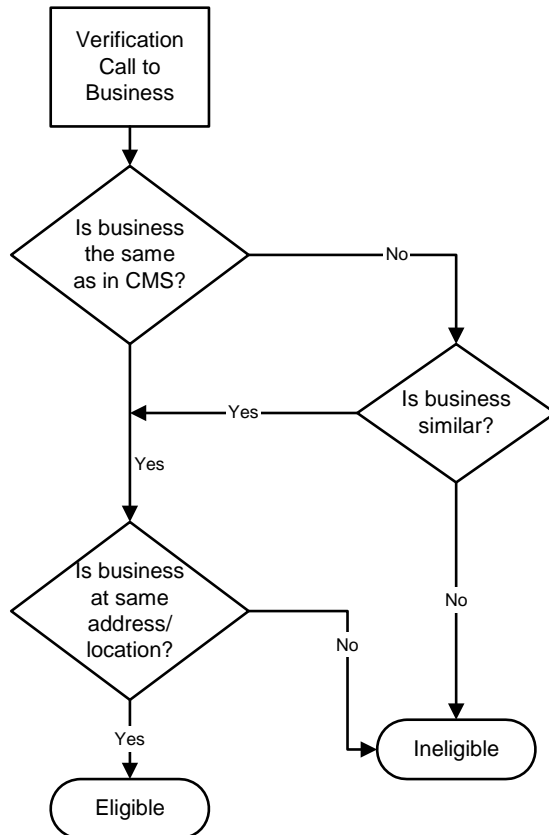


Exhibit 2. Guide to Determining Business Eligibility

Scenario	Business Question	Address Question	Eligible	Ineligible	Example
1) Same business, same address/location	Yes	Yes	X		Most common scenario—Apex Plumbing, Inc. is located at 10 Vine Street. You confirm the business is Apex Plumbing, Inc., located at 10 Vine Street.
2) Similar business, same address/location	Yes	Yes	X		Business in CMS is McDonald's located at 1020 Hwy 54. You confirm that Hardee's is now located at 1020 Hwy 54.
3) Different business, same address/location	No	Yes		X	Business in CMS is Clarion Home Mortgage located at 111 Hwy. 17. You confirm that Pizza Hut is the new business located at 111 Hwy. 17.
4) Different address/location, regardless of business status	Yes	No		X	Business in CMS is Carolina Theater located at 124 Slater Road. You confirm Carolina Theater is no longer at that address. Carolina Theater has moved to 100 Airport Blvd.

In most cases, the business eligibility status of a sample establishment can be easily obtained by calling the establishment. However, in a small percentage of cases, such as when the phone call is never answered (i.e., all calls result in a Ring, No Answer code) or is continually busy, the process of determining business eligibility is somewhat more involved. In these cases, the BLs use a variety of tracing procedures to try to determine the establishment's business eligibility status, such as accessing online Directory Assistance databases, searching the Internet to see if the establishment has a Web site, or calling similar businesses in the local area to see if they know the status of the target business. If the BLs conclude from this process that the establishment is indeed business



eligible but no contact is possible, they will assign a “pending refusal/nonresponse” code. Alternatively, if they conclude that the establishment is not business eligible, they will assign a “pending business ineligible” code. As noted above, both of these codes trigger an automatic referral of the case to supervisory review. The supervisors will review the call history and either refer the case back to the BL for additional follow-up (or take additional follow-up actions themselves) or else assign a final “refusal/nonresponse” or a final “business ineligible” code (2.2% of all sampled establishments), based on their professional assessment of the “evidence” at hand.

Again, we believe the overall cooperation rate and the four stage-specific rates we provided to the Panel in the April 17th presentation are appropriate for the O*NET data collection methodology. They provide important information for the various stages of the establishment recruitment process. For example, the overall cooperation rate is an excellent measure of (1) the BLs’ performance in obtaining needed information from sample establishments, and (2) the willingness of the business community to participate in the O*NET data collection program. We also believe that the multiple rates are consistent with the spirit of the AAPOR standards.

