

U.S. Doc Implements Innovative Approach to the Survey

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The U.S. Department of Commerce, Office of Travel and Tourism Industries (OTTI) announced today an innovative approach for enhancing travel data collection. The Survey of International Air Travelers program will begin to implement a new electronic survey data collection method.

Under the leadership of Helen Marano, Director of OTTI, the Survey program, now in its 25th year, will be available to all the major booking engines (CRS) and airline reservations (.com) systems. Based on a successful 'e-pilot' study, OTTI and its vendor, CIC Research, Inc. of San Diego, will implement the new system in phases. The first phase of the electronic data collection will focus on the distribution and collection of the English language version of the questionnaire, targeting surveys for 2008 using 15 percent of the allocated research resources. The questionnaire will essentially be the same as the legacy paper-based system which has been in effect since 1996 so that the results will compile seamlessly with results from the non-electronic approach.

The goals are to expand the program from the current base of 70,000 respondents, make it more representative and convert the entire English language version of the Survey to an electronic medium by the end of 2009. For this first phase, the questionnaire will be divided into pre-trip and post-trip sections. This is a key difference from the current paper-based methodology. OTTI also plans to improve the question content and format in the future in order to accommodate travel industry needs and technology changes. As the program evolves the foreign language versions of the Survey will also become electronic.

Current stakeholders include public and private entities, from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, to U.S. and foreign airlines, airports, destination marketing organizations, aircraft manufacturers and hotel/lodging organizations. The Survey data is used to determine origin-destination travel patterns, traveler demographics, consumer choice resources, trip characteristics and spending patterns.

Presentations will be made on this innovative improvement to the Survey methodology at the upcoming Travel & Tourism Research Association (TTRA) annual conference from June 15 - 18 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

For more information on the Survey please go to: <http://www.tinet.ita.doc.gov/research/programs/ifs/index.html>.

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