

## OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET

### Standard Occupational Classification Revision Policy Committee's Proposals for Revising the SOC's Principles of Classification, Purpose and Scope, and Conceptual Framework

**AGENCY:** Office of Management and Budget, Executive Office of the President.

**ACTION:** Notice of solicitation of comments.

**SUMMARY:** Under title 44 U.S.C. 3504, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) is seeking public comment on the Standard Occupational Classification Revision Policy Committee's (SOCRPC) proposals for revising the 1980 Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) Manual's principles of classification, purpose and scope, and conceptual framework. In a prior Federal Register notice (February 28, 1995, 60 FR 10998-11002), the public was provided the opportunity to comment on the uses of occupational data; propose changes to the existing 1980 SOC classification principles, purpose and scope, and conceptual options; and review the SOCRPC's proposed revision process. OMB plans another public comment period on the SOCRPC's final recommendations in the fall of 1996 when the SOCRPC will propose changes to the existing *SOC Manual* at the detailed occupation level based on an agreed upon set of classification principles, purpose and scope, and unified conceptual framework. The SOC revision is tentatively scheduled for implementation beginning in July 1997. All Federal agencies that collect occupational data are expected to utilize the new system.

#### Request for Comments

The SOCRPC welcomes comments with respect to any topic related to occupational classification, but is specifically interested in comments concerning:

- (1) The classification principles underlying the new SOC,
- (2) The purpose and scope of the new SOC,
- (3) The unified conceptual framework used to guide the revision, and
- (4) Public proposals for changes to the existing SOC at the detailed 4-digit level based on the principles, purpose and scope, and conceptual framework presented in this notice.

**DATES:** To ensure consideration in the development of the SOC, all comments

must be in writing and received on or before November 17, 1995.

**ADDRESSES:** Please send comments to Thomas J. Plewes, Chairman, Standard Occupational Classification Revision Policy Committee, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Suite 4945, 2 Massachusetts Avenue, N.E., Washington, DC 20212.

#### Electronic Availability and Comment

This document is available on the Internet from the Bureau of Labor Statistics via World Wide Web (WWW) browser and E-mail. To obtain this document via WWW browser, connect to "http://stats.bls.gov/bls/home.html" then select "Surveys and Programs," then select "Occupational Employment Statistics," then select "Standard Occupational Classification Documents." To obtain this document via E-mail or to submit comments, send a message to [socrevision@bls.gov](mailto:socrevision@bls.gov) (use only lower case letters). Comments received at this address by the date specified above will be included as part of the official record.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Paul Hadlock, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, E-mail [Hadlock@bls.gov](mailto:Hadlock@bls.gov), telephone number (202) 606-6502, FAX (202) 606-6645.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

##### Background

The Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) Manual was last revised in 1980. Furthermore, it has not been fully utilized by Federal occupational data gathering agencies which have frequently departed from the standard over the years as new occupations have emerged and opportunities for improvements have presented themselves. In view of these circumstances, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has acknowledged the need to develop a new SOC and obtain the cooperation of all Federal occupational data collection agencies in using the new standard.

In its February 28, 1995, Federal Register notice, OMB announced the formation of the Standard Occupational Classification Revision Policy Committee, chaired by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), with representatives from the Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce; the Employment and Training Administration (ETA), U.S. Department of Labor; the Office of Personnel Management; and the Defense Manpower Data Center, U.S. Department of Defense. *Ex officio* members include the Office of Management and Budget, the National Science Foundation, and the National Occupational Information Coordinating

Committee. The SOCRPC reports to OMB, which has responsibility for all economic classification systems (other than those for international trade).

Following the issuance of the first Federal Register notice, the Employment and Training Administration and the Bureau of Labor Statistics sponsored a Seminar on Research Findings in April 1995, on behalf of the SOCRPC. The seminar papers provided insights useful in the decisionmaking process concerning conceptual issues, principles of classification, compatibility with existing databases, and measurability. The seminar provided a forum for discussion of key issues related to the development of the new SOC. These were separated into three main topics: (1) user needs, (2) conceptual options, and (3) measurement issues. In addition to the authors who presented their papers, the seminar was attended by representatives of agencies involved directly with the SOC revision and by other interested parties from government, private industry, and research organizations. The papers from the seminar were published in the SOCRPC's *Seminar on Research Findings, April 11, 1995* and are available through the BLS information contact.

As a result of responses to the previous Federal Register notice and the Committee's other activities, the SOCRPC, with the concurrence of OMB, has agreed that a common occupational classification system for the United States is needed and should be put in place.

#### Part 1: Standard Occupational Classification Principles

The SOCRPC recommends that the new Standard Occupational Classification system should conform to a set of common principles, the immediate purpose of which would be to guide the development of the new classification structure:

(1) The Classification should cover all occupations in which work is performed for pay or profit, including work performed in family-operated enterprises by family members who are not directly compensated. It should exclude occupations unique to volunteers.

(2) The Classification should reflect the current occupational structure of the United States and have sufficient flexibility to assimilate new occupations into the structure as they become known.

(3) While striving to reflect the current occupational structure, the Classification should maintain linkage

with past systems. The importance of historical comparability should be weighed against the desire for incorporating substantive changes to occupations occurring in the work force.

(4) Occupations should be classified based upon work performed, skills, education, training, licensing, and credentials.

(5) Occupations should be classified in homogeneous groups that are defined so that the content of each group is clear.

(6) Each occupation should be assigned to only one group at the lowest level of the Classification.

(7) The employment size of an occupational group should not be the major reason for including or excluding it from separate identification.

(8) Supervisors should be identified separately from the workers they supervise wherever possible in keeping with the real structure of the world of work. An exception should be made for professional and technical occupations where supervisors or lead workers should be classified in the appropriate group with the workers they supervise.

(9) Apprentices and trainees should be classified with the occupations for which they are being trained, while helpers and aides should be classified separately since they are not in training for the occupation they are helping.

(10) Comparability with the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-88) should be considered in the structure, but should not be an overriding factor.

#### *Request for Comments*

The Committee invites comments on the classification principles proposed for the new SOC.

#### Part 2: Purpose and Scope

In addition to developing classification principles, it is also important to define the purpose and scope of the new SOC. The Committee agrees with many of the original goals and purposes of the 1980 SOC. The current effort will emphasize the OMB mandate for the use of the SOC by all Federal occupation data gatherers and the need for collecting and maintaining the data required to adjust and improve the SOC on a regular basis.

The basic purpose of the Standard Occupational Classification is to provide a mechanism for referencing and aggregating occupation-related data. The system is designed to maximize the analytical utility of statistics on labor force, employment, income, and other occupational data collected for a variety of purposes by various agencies of the United States Government, State and

local government agencies, professional associations, labor unions, research organizations, and private industry.

The SOC provides a coding system and taxonomy for identifying and classifying occupations within a framework suitable for a wide variety of users both in and out of government. Due to the extensive amount of occupational detail existing within the SOC and the myriad uses for the data, different users will likely have varying needs for levels of detail. The SOC is constructed with the flexibility to allow for this range of detail requirements. It is intended that all major Federal occupational data gatherers will use this classification as the basic framework for their information collections. The SOC thus will serve as the Nation's comprehensive occupational classification system.

To allow for changes in the structure of occupations, periodic reviews and revisions will draw on the experience gained in using the system.

#### *Request for Comments*

The Committee invites comments on the purpose and scope of the SOC.

#### Part 3: The Conceptual Framework for the New Standard Occupational Classification

The February Federal Register notice provided four options for a conceptual framework for the new SOC. These were: (1) type-of-work performed, (2) the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-88), (3) skills-based systems, and (4) economic-based systems.

Based upon comments received in response to the Federal Register notice, evaluation of the papers from the Seminar on Research Findings, and much deliberation by members of the SOCRPC, the Committee has selected a hybrid concept that focuses on type-of-work performed but incorporates skills-based considerations as the conceptual framework for the new SOC. The committee based its decision, in part, on the need to maximize the ability of users to link the new system with the historical system. The SOCRPC recognized that, in view of the predominant uses of the classification system, a skills-based taxonomy is also needed.

A skills-based system is defined as one that considers the person's ability to carry out the tasks and duties of a given job. Skill has two dimensions. The first is related to the complexity and range of tasks and duties including knowledge and experience, which are often defined by preparation levels and credentials, considered necessary for *new entrants*

to an occupation (skill level). The second is related to both the type-of-work performed and the nature of the work activities. These encompass all aspects of the work including materials handled, tools and equipment used, and kinds of goods and services produced (skill type). Though both will be considered, it is expected that skill type will be the predominant dimension considered in developing the new SOC, because type is more measurable than level.

The Committee proposes the use of the BLS Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) occupational classification system as the starting point for the new SOC framework. The Committee also proposes the use of the O\*NET (The Occupational Information Network), ETA's new automated replacement for the Dictionary of Occupational Titles (DOT), to inform the development of the new SOC.

During the period of preparation of the new system, the SOCRPC will continue to monitor developments in the field, including experience in other countries, and will evaluate adding skills-based components to the SOC when agencies can measure and collect them, or when a dependable skills-oriented database is established. In particular, the SOCRPC will continue to evaluate the measurability of competencies—those attributes that the person brings to the job that reflect, in addition to skill level and type, attitudes and the like.

#### *Request for Comments*

The Committee invites comments on the proposal for the conceptual basis of the SOC, and on the proposal to use the BLS Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) occupational classification system as the starting point for the creation of the new SOC framework.

#### Part 4: Detailed Occupational Level Changes to the Existing SOC Based on the Principles and Conceptual Framework Presented in This Federal Register Notice

The Committee is interested in obtaining as much information as possible concerning the needs of the public for changes to specific occupational categories. Many of the issues related to the concepts and principles for the new SOC are broad-based, e.g., whether or not emerging, highly-technical jobs are adequately represented. However, as part of the revision, occupations at the most detailed levels must be considered. Thus, the SOCRPC is seeking suggestions for detailed occupational

changes that add or delete current occupations within the 1980 SOC.

#### *Request for Comments*

All comments, however specific or general in nature, whether comprehensive to the entire occupational structure or pertinent to only one occupation, are welcome.

#### *Work Plan*

The SOCRPC intends to begin the detailed development of the new SOC with the formation of work teams from the Federal agencies in December 1995. Public comments and the input from member agencies will form the basis for the development of the new classification structure. The specific milestones for activities of the SOCRPC are as follows:

- (1) Work teams established to begin work on the SOC detailed revision. (December 1995)
- (2) Draft SOCRPC recommendations on the detailed SOC revision completed. (June 1996)
- (3) Seminar to discuss the draft SOCRPC recommendations and the implications of the new SOC for other occupational classification systems. (August 1996)
- (4) Publish Federal Register notice of final SOCRPC recommendations for public comment. (September 1996)

(5) Publish Federal Register notice of final OMB decisions on SOC. (January 1997)

(6) Development and publication of new *SOC Manual*. (July 1997)

#### *Public Review Procedure*

All comments and proposals received in response to this notice will be available for public inspection at the Bureau of Labor Statistics during normal business hours, 8:15 a.m. to 4:45 p.m., in Suite 4945, 2 Massachusetts Avenue, N.E., Washington DC 20212. Please call BLS on (202) 606-6402 to obtain an appointment to enter the suite. The SOCRPC final recommendations will be published in the Federal Register for public review and comment prior to final action by OMB.

#### *References*

(1) The *Standard Occupational Classification Manual, 1980*, was published by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Office of Federal Statistical Policy and Standards and can be found in many reference libraries. It is now available in print and 9-track magnetic tape formats from the National Technical Information Service, 5285 Port Royal Road, Springfield, VA 22161, catalog number PB81-162521, telephone number (703) 487-4650, FAX (703) 321-8547.

(2) Standard Occupational Classification Revision Policy

Committee, "Summary of Comments on the February 28, 1995 Federal Register Notice concerning the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) Revision Policy Committee Proposal to Revise the SOC," May 1995. Available from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2 Massachusetts Avenue, N.E., Washington DC, 20212, telephone number (202) 606-6502, FAX (202) 606-6645.

(3) Standard Occupational Classification Revision Policy Committee, Seminar on Research Findings, April 11, 1995, September 1995. Available from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2 Massachusetts Avenue, N.E., Washington DC, 20212, telephone number (202) 606-6502, FAX (202) 606-6645.

(4) The definitions and occupational structure for the Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) occupational classification system can be obtained electronically or in hard copy by contacting the Bureau of Labor Statistics, OES Program, Suite 4840, 2 Massachusetts Avenue, N.E., Washington DC, 20212, telephone number (202) 606-6569, FAX (202) 606-6645.

Sally Katzen,

*Administrator, Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs.*

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