

# Office of Management and Budget Clearance Package

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IRS Stakeholder Liaison Headquarters (SL HQ)

Activity/Event Survey:

2008 National Phone Forums

Internal Revenue Service  
Small Business/Self Employee (SB/SE)  
Communications, Liaison and Disclosure (CLD)  
Operating Unit

**December 10, 2007**

# Introduction

## Background

The mission of **Communications, Liaison and Disclosure (CLD)** is to develop and deliver integrated strategic communications and educational products to SB/SE employees, taxpayers, to partner with key stakeholders in tax administration including: federal, state and local governmental agencies, practitioners, and industry groups, to develop as well as execute strategies designed to enhance voluntary compliance and to ensure that federal tax information is protected by those agencies that receive federal tax data. CLD is also responsible for a wide range of programs and activities in support of both SB/SE and the IRS Strategic Plans, including administration of the IRS Disclosure Program, IRC §6103, the Freedom of Information Act and Privacy Act, and administration of the IRS Disaster Assistance Program.

CLD is comprised of six functions that provide critical support in accomplishment of SB/SE and IRS missions and objectives:

- Governmental Liaison and Disclosure
- Stakeholder Liaison Headquarters
- Stakeholder Liaison Field
- Communications
- Policy and Strategic Planning
- Safeguards

**Specific to this package, Stakeholder Liaison Headquarters (SL HQ)** – focuses on national engagement of the payroll and practitioner community and stakeholder organizations to provide information about IRS policies, practices and procedures to ensure compliance with the tax laws, both by voluntary means and through enforcement programs; oversees IRS involvement in disaster assistance and emergency relief activities.

Key engagement vehicles/tools for SL HQ and their customers are the use of tax information “Phone Forums”. **The National Phone Forum (NPF)** process enables the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to communicate with the tax professional community and professional associations. The program is designed to provide presentations on tax gap and key tax topics across the country. Topics selected have national impact and the forums use presenters who are viewed to be subject matter experts (SMEs) on the topic. Presentations occur throughout the business day enabling stakeholders to participate as their schedule permits.

In addition to the NPF process, there is a **Local Phone forum (LPF)** process, which provides Stakeholder Liaison (SL) personnel the opportunity to address issues that are not

national in scope but maybe of interest in their area/region. As a means of eliminating duplicating messages in FY08, Communication Liaison Disclosure (CLD) SL Field has discontinued all local forums with messages consistent with National Phone Forums (NPF).

**Note:** While this OMB package outlines the details of the NPF events (public burden, event schedules etc) SL-HQ would like to use the survey for smaller forums the Bi-monthly SB/SE National Practitioner Forums that generally attracts no more than 25 participants.

Aside from providing updated tax information, the NPFs can provide an added educational benefit to participants. For some of the participants, the national forums are being used to gain Continuing Professional Education (CPE) credits, which are needed to maintain their professional certifications. An example would be a participant who is Certified Public Accountant (CPA).

While past attendance may suggest that the NPFs are successful in terms of planning, scheduling and content, no formal process currently exist to measure stakeholder/participant satisfaction. Therefore, in an effort to gauge/baseline the quality and satisfaction of their forums, SL HQ would like to administrative an event/feedback survey at the conclusion of each NPF.

## **Objectives of Data Collection**

SL HQ specifically seeks to gain feedback from NPF participants on the overall quality and satisfaction of the NPF activities/events. The survey data would be used to enhance future NPF events and to develop new strategies if needed. Furthermore, the event survey will be used to identify key compliance issues for future events throughout the year and in FY 2009.

## **Methodology**

### **Sample Design**

This survey will be administered after a voluntary IRS customer event. SL HQ intends to survey the total **population** of NPF participants per event.

The NPF feedback survey will assist in measuring the quality of the event and satisfaction levels of stakeholders/participants to ensure that positive relationships with customers are being developed and maintained.

The phone forums are posted on IRS.gov (for an example of a NPF posting, see Attachment I) and advertisement is made on Tax Talk Today (see Attachment II for an example) as well as individual e-mail distribution from IRS Stakeholder Relationship Mangers to their partners in other agencies/organizations and/or associations. Additionally, those Partners post the events on their individual websites. The Phone

Forums are first come first served and SL HQ generally host three sessions per month on an assigned day.

Participants will be notified via e-mail of the survey with their confirmation of enrollment into their specific NPF session (See Attachment III). Subsequent to the forums, the survey and/or a link to a web based survey will be emailed to each registered participant. The participants for the NPF sessions are primarily practitioners, e.g., return preparers, the majority of whom are enrolled agents or sole practitioner CPAs that prepare Federal Income Tax returns as part of their normal tax practice. The participants may also include IRS employees. In the past year (FY07), over 12,000 people participated in ten (10) NPF sessions.

NPFs sessions present a unique opportunity for SL HQ to obtain feedback from a diverse group of practitioners who participate in the Phone Forums.

## Data to be Collected

Attachment IV, "Event Evaluation Survey" outlines the type of information that will be collected from participants. Primarily, SL HQ seeks to obtain practitioner feedback on the overall quality and satisfaction with the NPF events. Secondly, SL HQ would like suggestions for improvements and for future topics.

## How Collected and Used

NPF participants will first be notified of the survey via e-mail with their confirmation of enrollment in their session. At the conclusion of each event, NPF participants will then be reminded and asked to complete an e-survey.

The surveys will be reviewed and analyzed by SBSE Research in Philadelphia. Using descriptive statistics, the findings will be presented to SL HQ in table format. Suggestions and Comments will be reviewed and summarized. Findings will be reviewed and considered by SL HQ for improvements to the NPF and for potential topics. The initial baseline data will also be used to measure against the satisfaction and quality of future NPF events in 2009 and beyond.

## Dates Collection Begin/End

The FY 2008 phone tax forums are held monthly throughout the United States, between October 17, 2007 and September 17, 2008. **SL HQ will only issue the survey for the remaining NPF events upon receipt of OMB approval.** As indicated, NPF participants will be notified of the feedback survey via e-mail with their confirmation of enrollment in their NPF session.

## Potential Data Collection Dates

February 20, 2008	Wednesday
March 19, 2008	Wednesday
April 16, 2008	Wednesday
May 21, 2008	Wednesday
June 18, 2008	Wednesday
July 23, 2008	Wednesday
August 20, 2008	Wednesday
September 17, 2008	Wednesday

## Who is Conducting the Research

SB/SE Stakeholder Headquarters (SL HQ) requests this research. The event survey was developed by the SB/SE Research staff in Philadelphia, PA. The e-survey will be administered and analyzed by the same research site. The results will be provided to SL HQ within 15 days after each event.

## Cost of Study

The estimated cost to administer and analyze the survey results is \$ 13,420. This amount includes the salary of the Lead Analyst and any procured survey software.

## Stipend

A monetary stipend will not be offered to participants.

## Recruitment Efforts

Practitioners who have a confirmed registration for the NPF event will be asked to participate in the survey. Based on interest for IRS Tax Forums/ Seminars and Workshops, SL HQ expects that practitioners who need CPE credits and general tax information will be interested taking the survey. This survey will not be replacing any existing IRS survey that is related to the NPF initiative.

## **Location and Facility**

The NPF is a nationwide survey. AT&T Executive Services will be used to secure 2,500 conference lines for each event for participants throughout the country.

## **Expected Response Rate**

Given the prior interest and participation in the NPF events, SL HQ expects to have a response rate 75%.

## **Methods to Maximize Response Rate**

All NPF participants will be issued a survey notice via email. After the conclusion of the actual NPF event, participants will be verbally reminded of the survey. Seven days after the initial survey notification, a reminder email will be issued.

## **Test Structure/Design**

Prior to distributing the surveys, Philadelphia Research and SL HQ will conduct a pilot test using 10 participants. The purpose is to ensure that all questions and statements are interpreted similarly by all participants. Once the responses from the pilot participants are received, SBSE Research will confer with SL HQ to finalize the survey instrument.

The survey has been designed to model an approved OMB “Feedback Survey” developed by TEGE for their specialty events, see Appendix IV. The primary difference between the two surveys is the method of distribution /administration (on-line/e-survey) and the use of drop-down options/menus for the selection of participant answers.

## **Efforts to not Duplicate Research**

While “Event Feedback Surveys” are not new to the IRS, they have not been used in the context of NPFs events. Since NPFs are unique to CLD –SL HQ no other NPF survey has been or will be issued for NPF events. The survey may be used in subsequent years with OMB approval.

## **Participants Criteria**

Participants for this survey must have registered with SL HQ and received a SL-HQ NPF registration confirmation for the event, See Attachment III.

## Privacy/Disclosure/Confidentiality/Security Issues

SBSE Research will ensure compliance with the Taxpayer Bill of Rights II. All participants will be treated fairly and appropriately. The security of the data used in this project and the privacy of taxpayers/participants will be carefully safeguarded at all times. Confidentiality will be safeguarded. Respondents to the survey will not be identified to SL HQ. In addition, no taxpayer names or business names will be mentioned in the summary reports.

For the subject project,

- The use of taxpayer data will be restricted to authorized personnel for approved research projects;
- Taxpayer/participant privacy will be safeguarded;
- The data used in a research project will be validated;
- Any known or potential limitations in the data used in a research project will be properly disclosed;
- Any data used in a research project will be obtained, utilized, stored, disseminated, and transported in accordance with the Internal Revenue Manual;
- Related documentation (data dictionary, record layout, sampling plan, data validation documentation, syntax and other computer code) will be made available to any research site requesting data;
- All data used in a research project and under the control of Research, whether stored on computer or archived on magnetic media, will be destroyed in a timely manner in accordance with the Internal Revenue Manual.

This document covers all data used in any research activity from internal or external sources.

The Paperwork Reduction Act Statement & OMB Control Number will be provided on the survey.

## Burden Hours

SL HQ plans to issue their NPF survey on a monthly basis. Given the amount of AT&T conference lines available from February 08 through September 08, there is a potential for 2,500 registered participants each month for a potential survey population of 20,000 people (2,500 participants per event x 8 events).

**Note: The above surveyed population could be more or less determining on when the OMB approval is received.**

Given the above population of 20, 000 participants, the total estimated public burden is **1,000 hours**. However, with an accepted response rate of 75% the public burden would be **750 hours**.

For persons participating in the survey, the burden time is estimated at 3 minutes.

Participants will not experience travel time for this study. The following tables detail the total burden calculation.

<b>Total Estimated Burden Hours</b>				
	Number of Persons	Number of NPFs	Time Estimate (Minutes)	Total Burden (Hours)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	$[(1)*(2)*(3)]/60$
Potential Survey Population	2,500	8	3	<b>1,000</b>
With an Estimated Response Rate of 75%				<b>750</b>

## **Study Contact**

For questions regarding the Survey, contact:

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