

OMB Package
2007 External Stakeholder Survey and Focus Group Interview
Language Services Branch (LSb)

Introduction

In October 2006, the Multilingual Initiative Strategy Office (MLISO) transitioned to the Media & Publications (M&P) Operating Division. This transition spearheaded the merger of the MLISO with the newly established Virtual Translation Office (VTO) in the Tax Forms and Publication division within M&P. The merger has resulted in the establishment of a new “Language Services Branch”. This branch brings together all aspects (research, strategic planning, translation, development, and delivery) for improving access to Limited English Proficient (LEP) taxpayers.

Historically, the MLISO, as apart of their LEP Needs Assessment Process conducts surveys of external stakeholders (e.g. tax practitioners) to solicit feedback on tax related language assistance issues. This practice includes conducting external stakeholder surveys at the Nationwide Tax Forums held in six locations across the country. The feedback, combined with feedback from other internal and external sources, is utilized to develop recommendations for improvement projects to expand/improve LEP access to IRS products, and services.

In keeping with established practice, the LSb will be conducting surveys and focus group interviews at the six 2007 Nationwide Tax Forum locations: Atlanta (July 17 – 19), Chicago (July 31 – August 2), Las Vegas (August 21 – 23), New York (August 28 – 30), Anaheim (September 11 - 13), Orlando (September 18 – 20). LSb staff will conduct these surveys to assess the needs of tax practitioners and other external stakeholders whose clients who have difficulty speaking and understanding English. The focus this year will be on identifying and prioritizing documents critical to the LEP and capturing feedback on the effectiveness of the redesigned irs.gov/Espanol website.

Background

Executive Order 13166 (EO 13166), "Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency" requires federal agencies to provide meaningful access to persons who have difficulty speaking and understanding English. In response to the executive order, the Multilingual Initiative (MLI) was established to determine the need to expand and/or integrate products and services to assist limited English-speaking taxpayers in meeting their tax responsibilities. The LSb is continuing the MLI efforts of developing strategies and policies that target the specific needs of LEP customers.

In doing so, the LSb is working to identify LEP language assistance needs and key areas of focus that must be addressed to ensure that LEP persons have “meaningful access” to products and services that assist them in meeting their tax responsibilities.

A key component of the EO 13166 requires internal and external “assessment” of the LEP population and their language assistance needs. Among other things, the executive order requires regular assessment to determine the “resources that will be needed to provide effective language assistance” and the effectiveness of those resources. This requirement includes the mandate to “ensure that vital documents are translated”.

Through the implementation of the LEP Needs Assessment Process a three-pronged approach has been developed to comply with the mandate. A key component of this process involves conducting external assessments to capture qualitative and quantitative feedback from taxpayers, tax practitioners, community groups, advocacy groups, and volunteers.

Purpose

This specific OMB request is to obtain approval of LSb efforts to conduct surveys and focus groups of tax practitioners at the 2007 Nationwide Tax Forums. The tax forums present an opportunity for the LSb to solicit feedback from tax professionals on those IRS documents that are critical to LEP understanding of their rights and obligations as taxpayers. Additionally, the tax forums affords the opportunity to gain valuable feedback on our efforts to redesign the irs.gov/Espanol website to make the site more useful to the tax practitioners and their clients.

Research Objectives

The overall objective of this project is to provide quantitative and qualitative data to the MLI Strategy Office with regard to tax professionals’ views on vital documents and the irs.gov/Espanol website. The specific business questions to be explored by this project are:

- What documents do tax practitioners believe are *critical* to LEP taxpayers?
- What *priority* should the IRS be placing on these critical documents?
- How effective is the redesigned irs.gov/Espanol website?

The LSb, with W&I Research Group 2 support, will conduct the surveys and focus groups at the identified locations. W&I Research Group 2 will prepare a report of findings that will detail the qualitative feedback, as well as any recommendations for future administration of surveys and focus groups. This report will be submitted to the LSb upon W&I Research approval.

Efforts Not to Duplicate Research

The LSb has taken all steps to ensure that these research efforts have not been duplicated. This assurance is based on the fact that LSb has sole ownership of the responsibility to identify and translate vital documents and sole ownership of the irs.gov/Espanol website. Additionally, the LSb serves as the sole resource for providing information/data on these two products.

Methodology

Research Methodology – Booth Survey

To meet the objectives of this project we will complete the following steps:

Step 1 – At all six Tax Forums, the LSb will be responsible for administering the survey questionnaire to tax practitioners who visit their information booth at the 2007 Tax Forums. The survey will be offered to all practitioners that have Spanish speaking customers who approach the booth for information or walk by. The survey questionnaires will be completed by tax practitioners.

Step 2 – the LSb staff will administer the survey randomly to tax practitioners who provide assistance to non-English speaking clients. The survey proposes eight categories (identified via previous taxpayer and practitioner surveys):

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Identification Numbers | Tax Return Preparation, |
| EITC, Dependents | Education, |
| Tax Payment | Self-Employment, |
| Taxpayer Rights & Remedies | Other |

Step 3 – W&I Research will report preliminary findings via periodic reporting the LSb.

Step 4 - W&I Research will prepare a final report of findings and submit to the LSb.

Research Methodology – Focus Group Interviews

To meet the objectives of this project we will complete the following steps:

Step 1 – Trained analysts from the LSb, with experience in dealing with multilingual issues, will screen the potential focus group participants to determine the following:

- Type of returns most frequently prepared
- Client base is mostly Spanish speaking
- Whether participant is bilingual
- Ever used the Espanol web site

Step 2 – Focus group participants will be allowed time to “surf” the irs.gov/Espanol web site to get an opportunity to see and/or utilize the new features.

Step 3 - LSb and W&I Research Group 2 analysts will serve as focus group moderators, asking probing questions to stimulate discussion on the website.

Step 4 – W&I Research will report preliminary findings via periodic reporting the LSb.

Step 5 - W&I Research will prepare a final report of findings and submit to the LSb.

Sampling Plan

The survey will be administered at each Tax Forum by a survey administrator. Survey questionnaires will be offered to all practitioners who approach the booth for information or walk by. There will be no sampling design or implementation.

Explanation of Decision to Provide any Payment or Gift to Participants

Each selected participant who completes the survey and participates is entitled to receive a gift of nominal value. [The gift will be one or more giveaways approved by the IRS for distribution at the 2007 Nationwide Tax Forums].

Estimated Burden Hours

Booth Survey

The estimated time to complete the survey is three minutes. We will assume a 20% eligibility rate, that is, 20% of the participants meet the qualifying criteria, and a 50% completion rate of qualified participants. Those who qualify and agree to participate will also be asked to complete the fifteen question survey.

Total number of potential participants screened day one: 1000 [11:00 – 6:00]

Total number of potential participants screened day two: 700 [8:00 – 2:00]

(1700 practitioners screened @ 6 tax forums = 10200)

10200 practitioners screened x .20 eligibility rate = 2040 participants.

Estimated screening time: 1 minute

Estimated screening burden: $1 \times 10200 = 170$ hours

Estimated time to complete survey: 3 minutes

Estimated participant burden: 2040×3 minutes = 102 hours

Total burden (screening and survey participation) = 272 hours

Justification for less than 50% response rate –

The LSb assumes that all data collected from this survey is qualitative in nature, and that no critical decisions will be made by LSb solely from the analysis of data from this survey. The results from this survey are simply one piece of a larger set of information needed to assess practitioner/taxpayer language assistance needs related to products and services provided by the IRS.)

Focus Group

Total number of potential participants screened day one: 20 [11:00 – 6:00]
(20 practitioners screened @ 6 tax forums = 120)
120 practitioners screened x .75 eligibility rate = 90 participants.

Estimated screening time: 1 minute
Estimated screening burden: 1 x 120 = 2 hours

Estimated time to complete Focus Group: 2 hours
Estimated participant burden: 90 x 2 hours = 180 hours

Total burden (screening and survey participation) = 182 hours

Estimated Cost

LSb estimates total survey/focus group costs as follows:

Travel - (LSb staff to all six locations)-	\$16,000.00
Gift – (for participating in survey/focus group)	\$ 5,600.00
Printing – (vendor development of survey)	\$ 700.00
Equipment Rental	\$ 2,500.00
Total estimated cost	\$24,800.00

Privacy, Security, Disclosure, and Confidentiality

The MLI Strategy Office will ensure that the utmost scrutiny is given to privacy, security, and disclosure when reporting the results from the survey. No individual taxpayer data will be used for this project. The data derived from the survey will be used in the final report. During screening and survey administration only the first name of participants will be used. We will limit and control the amount of information that we collect to those items that are necessary to accomplish the research objectives.

We will protect the privacy of survey participants by not using names in our report. We will also control official access to the information and will not allow public access to the information.

We will apply fair information and record-keeping practices to ensure protection of all participants. The criterion for disclosure laid out in the Privacy Act, the Freedom of Information Act, and section 6103 of the Internal Revenue Code provides for the protection of information as well as its release to authorized recipients.

Special Tallies and Other Information

The following information will be provided within 60 days after the close of the Tax Forums.

1. Findings: a brief summary of significant (important) findings that were evidenced in the results.
2. Actions taken or lessons learned: a brief summary of actions taken or lessons learned as a result of the findings.
3. Number of participants screened.
4. Number of survey participants.
5. Date the data collection began
6. Date the data collection ended.
7. Cost: reproduction costs, travel, overtime payments, and any other costs incurred as direct result of the survey.
8. Burden hours.

Attachments

- Focus Group Screener and Moderator's Guide
- Booth Survey Note to Reviewer
- Booth Survey Administrator's guide
- Booth Survey (Questions Only)