

**Office of Management and Budget
Clearance Package**

Customer Focus Groups:

Employee Plan Determination Customers

DRAFT

Internal Revenue Service
Tax Exempt and Government Entities Division

May 10, 2007

IRS FOCUS GROUPS – EP DETERMINATION PROCESS

Background

IRS has replaced the traditional measures of accomplishment with a balanced measurement system, consisting of business results, customer satisfaction, and employee satisfaction, to assess how well it is achieving its mission and objectives. The IRS Tax Exempt and Government Entities division (TE/GE) has administered four ongoing monthly mail surveys since 2001. TE/GE collects feedback from four customer segments: Employee Plan (EP) Determination, Exempt Organization (EO) Determination, EP Examination, and EO Examination. TE/GE collects feedback from these four customer segments to identify what TE/GE can do to improve service, to track progress in improving customer satisfaction over time, and to identify improvement opportunities.

Employee Plans recently implemented a staggered filing approach to their Determination process. In the past, every time the law changed resulting in a required plan amendment, all plans were required to file their amended determination application at the same time. This would result in a tremendous amount of work for the IRS at one point in time which caused months of backlogged inventory and untimely processing of the applications. Under the new staggered filing approach, Employee Plans will only be required to file amended applications every five or six years depending on the type of plan. Employee Plans is currently reviewing amended applications for Defined Contribution Plans, both individually designed plans and pre-approved plans. While we are gathering customer feedback from individually designed plan sponsors and practitioners through our ongoing EP Determination mail survey, we are not gathering feedback from pre-approved plan sponsors and practitioners.

Research Methodology

The IRS, the US Department of Labor, and the Cincinnati Bar Association are sponsoring their annual Employee Benefits Conference on June 14 & 15 this year. The majority of practitioners who submit EP Determination applications attend this conference each year. The upcoming conference provides an excellent opportunity to collect customer opinions and ideas from pre-approved plans sponsors and practitioners for improving the staggered filing determination application process. Focus groups will be conducted to assess satisfaction with this new filing process.

TE/GE will obtain lists of registered conference participants from the Cincinnati Bar Association and will use these lists to recruit focus group participants via telephone. Approximately 200 -250 practitioners attend this conference each year so we anticipate TE/GE will be able to confirm 12 participants each for two groups: mass submitters and non-mass submitters. One week before the conference TE/GE will send reminder e-mails or phone calls to the participants

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~~who already agreed to participate. The focus groups will take place fifteen~~
minutes after the last session of the conference adjourns on June 14th at the conference location. The focus groups are also listed on the conference agenda that will be provided to all participants so this will serve as another reminder to those who have already agreed to participate. The two focus groups will be moderated by trained IRS facilitators assisted by two members of TE/GE's Strategic Planning staff. TE/GE's Strategic Planning staff will prepare a report summarizing the focus group discussion and findings. Neither the notes of the discussions nor the summary report will include participant names or any identifying information. The participant screener and a draft of the moderator's guide are attached.

Tallies and Other Information

The following information is needed to satisfy OMB clearance requirements. It must be provided within 60 days after survey data collection operations are concluded:

1. FINDINGS: Provide a brief summary of significant (important) findings that were evidenced in the results.
2. ACTIONS TAKEN OR LESSONS LEARNED: Provide a brief summary of any actions taken or lessons learned as a result of the findings.
3. TAXPAYER PARTICIPATION:
 - a. SURVEYS:
 - i. Number of requests for taxpayer participation
 - ii. Number of questionnaires returned or interviews completed
4. DATE THE DATA COLLECTION BEGAN
5. DATE THE DATA COLLECTION ENDED
6. COST: Include printing, postage, travel, overtime payments, payments to vendors, and any other costs incurred as a direct result of the survey (do not include regular salaries of IRS employees).

Estimated Burden Hours

The IRS plans to conduct two focus groups with twelve participants each. We estimate each group to last one and a half hours. Participants will experience minimal screening and no travel time.

Only the burden of those customers participating in the focus groups is calculated below since the amount of time required to refuse participation is minimal.

(24 participants X 90 minutes per focus group) = 2,160 minutes = 36 hours

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Estimated Study Cost

The only cost to this study will run approximately \$2,300 for two IRS moderators and two IRS note-takers travel to the focus group location. The IRS is utilizing the conference facility so there is no location cost involved. The IRS will not offer participants an incentive to participate or refreshments.

Study Contact

For questions regarding the study, contact:

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Attachments

Participant Screener for Employee Plan (EP) Determination Focus Groups June 14, 2007

Recruiting Goals

- Two groups conducted at the Cincinnati Employee Benefits Conference
- Twelve participants per group – Mass and Non-mass Pre-Approved Defined Contribution Plan Submitters

The criteria are the following:

- Recruit for one and half hour with the expectation that the group will last an hour to an hour and a half.
- Participants have submitted a Pre-approved Defined Contribution Plan

Table 1: Focus Group Specifications

Location	Date	Time	# of Recruits	Participants
Cincinnati	6/14/07	5pm	24: 12 per group	EP Determination: Pre-approved Defined Contribution Plan submitters