

Appendix A. Screener and Moderator’s Guide for HIRE Practitioner Focus Groups

Screener Guide for HIRE Practitioner Focus Groups

Hello, my name is _____ and I am an employee of the Internal Revenue Service. I am recruiting approximately 12 tax practitioners to participate in a focus group interviews that will be held during this conference. Management at IRS has asked me to conduct the interview to gather ideas and opinions about your experiences with serving multilingual and non-English speaking taxpayers.

First, may I ask a few qualifying questions?

Question 1: Do you prepare taxes for taxpayers who are multilingual or do not speak English?

If the preparer does not prepare returns for these taxpayers, then go on to the next potential recruit. If you feel they have substantial experience, then go to Question 2.

Question 2: In the last year, have you used any products and services created by the IRS to specifically help these taxpayers? Do you consider yourself familiar with any of these products? Do you feel you’d like to contribute ideas on improving the products and services?

If the practitioner indicates that they have used the products/services enough to have an opinion about any of them and you feel that the practitioner shows the experience to be able to participate, then invite the practitioner to participate in the focus group.

We would like to invite you to participate in the focus group on with about eleven other tax practitioners. Again, we want to hear your opinions, views and ideas. The session should take approximately 2 hours at _____ am/pm in Room _____.

The Paperwork Reduction Act requires that the IRS display an OMB control number on all public information requests. The OMB Control Number for this focus group is 1545-1349. We estimate the time required to be two hours. Also, if you have any comments regarding the time estimates associated with this study or suggestions on making this process simpler, please write to:

Internal Revenue Service
Tax Products Coordinating Committee
SE:W:CAR:MP:T:T:SP
1111Constitution Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20224

Moderator’s Guide for HIRE Practitioner Focus Groups

Hi! My name is _____ and I’m a focus group moderator from the Internal Revenue Service. This is my co-moderator _____.

The IRS has a strong commitment to providing services and products to multilingual taxpayers and to taxpayers who do not speak English – services and products that allow these citizens to meet their tax obligations without undue burden.

Before we start, let me ask how many of you have ever participated in a focus group before? For those of you who have not, let me explain. A focus group is research tool used to gather ideas and opinions from a group of individuals with a common characteristic or experience by means of directed discussion.

We have some ground rules that I would like to go over:

The IRS has arranged this room during this conference for you to speak with us. We only need to know your first name in order to keep the discussion moving.

There are no **right or wrong answers**. Everyone’s opinion is valuable so I’d like everyone to participate. Please speak one-at-a-time, loudly, and clearly.

I will be watching our time and directing our conversation. My co-moderator will be the note taker. Because it’s hard to listen to your comments and capture everything, we will also tape this session. The tape will only be used to refresh our memory and to ensure that we convey your ideas and opinions accurately in the report. **(NO NAMES WILL BE USED IN THE REPORT)** Once the report is written, the tape is destroyed.

We will be here about 2 hours. There will be no formal break; however, if you need to stretch, go to the restroom, or walk around a little, please feel free to do so but please come back quickly. Your comments are very important to us. Please turn off any cell phones and/or beepers.

We are required by law to report to you the OMB control # for this public information request. That number is 1545-1349.

Warm Up

Let’s begin! Please give me your first name only, how long you’ve been in business and what types of returns you prepare. Note: Go around the table.

General Questions

Can you give us an idea of the kind of clients you work with and the types of services you provide in your practice? (Probe: clients: individuals, small business, self employed or large business/services: tax preparation, recordkeeping, employment taxes) (Go around the table)

How would you briefly describe your work with multilingual or non-English speaking taxpayers? (Probe: how often, how complex, is it a major part of your practice, etc.)

On Clients Who Do Not Speak English Fluently

Approximately, how many of your clients do not speak English fluently? What are the languages they speak?

How do your clients provide for any language assistance they may need? (Probe: Do you provide translation services, do they provide their own translation, do they use minors (people under the age of 18) to interpret for them?)

Tell me about your clients’ experiences with the IRS’s language services? (Probe: For example, over-the-phone interpreter services (dial 1-800 number), oral translation services, written translation services, Low Income Tax Clinic services, Español website)

If their clients have not used IRS services, ask why?

IRS Language Services Experiences

I would like to hear briefly about your experiences with the IRS’s language services? (Probe: For example, over-the-phone interpreter services (dial 1-800 number), oral translation services, written translation services, Low Income Tax Clinic services, Español website)

If you have not used IRS’s services, ask why? Do you provide your own language services? (Probe: If they provide their own language services, what languages do they assist with and language services do they provide?)

Have you or your clients worked with any of the IRS’s organizations? (LMSB, W & I, TE/GE, SB/SE: Campus Compliance Services, Collection, Communications, Liaison & Disclosure, Counsel, Examination) If so, which ones?

How was your experience with the IRS as they related to language issues your clients may have had? (Probe: timely, delays, courtesy, accuracy of information)

Were there any delays in providing you or your clients’ services because language assistance was needed? (Probe: Which organizations cause the delay? (LMSB, W & I, TE/GE, SB/SE: Campus Compliance Services, Collection, Communications, Liaison & Disclosure, Counsel, Examination))

What was the delay? (Probe: The IRS did not respond to your request for an interpreter, IRS did not translate a letter for your clients)

What impact did the delay in the IRS providing language assistance by an IRS organization have on you or your clients? (Probe: It made things burdensome for your clients, your clients had to pay extra penalties and taxes, the delay resulted in a stat notice?)

Did the IRS explain to you or your clients the options available for translation services?

Have you or your clients been unable to receive the language assistance you need with the IRS? If so, what language assistance is needed?

Overall, how satisfied were you with the language services provided by the IRS?

Over-the-Phone Interpreter (OPI) Services Experiences

How many of you are familiar with the over-the-phone interpreter (OPI) services? (*Show of hands*)

We recently conducted a test to see if over-the-phone interpreter services would provide assistance to taxpayers that do not speak English fluently. Did you or your clients use this service recently? (*Show of hands*)

If some of the practitioners or their clients used the service, how did you or your clients find out about this service being offered by the IRS?

Why did you or your clients need to use the over-the-phone service? (Probe: interview, notice from the IRS, letter from the IRS, other)

What language did you or your clients need to use with the over-the-phone interpreter services?

What did you and your clients think about the over-the-phone interpreter services?

Spanish Language Products

Are you or your clients aware of Spanish language products for individuals and businesses?

If yes, what products are you or your clients familiar with?

Do you distribute Spanish language products to your clients? If they do, which ones are distributed? If they do not distribute Spanish language products, ask why?

Is there any IRS information that should be translated from English to Spanish?

Overall Improvement Ideas

What kind of language services does the IRS need to provide to assist your clients who do not speak English fluently?

What would make the IRS’s language services better for you and your clients, other than what we’ve discussed?

Conclusion

Are there any more comments about these topics that you would like us to take back to IRS?

Are there any other issues you’d like to discuss?

Thank you for all your help. As our partners in tax administration, your ideas and opinions are very important to us. We hope that by working together we can both become more effective. Your participation here today is valuable and greatly appreciated.