

OMB Supporting Statement
Financial Management Service/Treasury
Direct Express Message Testing Survey
OMB No. 1510-0074

Background

The Financial Management Service (FMS), a bureau of the Department of the Treasury (Treasury), has requested Comerica Bank, acting as Treasury's Financial Agent, to plan and execute research for the Direct Express® program. To perform this task, Comerica's agent, MasterCard, has contracted with KRC Research.

Social Security and SSI beneficiaries now have the option of receiving their payments electronically through the Direct Express® card program managed by Comerica Bank, as Treasury's financial agent. This program provides those receiving Social Security and SSI payments an electronic method of receiving their benefits. Beneficiaries can enroll in Direct Express® by calling a 1-800 number or online through the Direct Express® Web site.

In April through June, inserts were sent along with check payments to SSA and SSI benefit recipients in Texas, Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Louisiana communicating the benefits and availability of the Direct Express® card.

This summer, a national communications campaign will be launched which includes a broad array of strategies and materials to communicate the benefits of the Direct Express® card to potential users. As part of this effort, 16 focus groups were recently conducted among a diverse group of SSA and SSI benefit recipients who receive paper checks instead of direct deposit.

Among other objectives, the qualitative research tested key benefit messages, promotional materials, and the fulfillment package to better understand what benefits and features of the Direct Express® card are most attractive and likely to encourage adoption of the card as a payment method among our target audiences. The results of these focus groups are currently being evaluated and FMS, along with its partners in this effort, are developing a communications platform designed to promote the card.

The qualitative research is part of a two step research process to determine the ideal message platform to communicate the benefits of the Direct Express® card to unbanked (and other) beneficiaries that will drive and support adoption of the Direct Express® Card. The next step in the research process is to quantitatively verify the focus group findings and to tailor specific communications to discrete audiences. This will include understanding reactions and likely adoption of the card based on a simple description of it, as well as testing key messages derived from the focus groups. We will also test specific reactions to the features of the card.

These research studies are a component of the data collection approved in the October 2003 Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) Market Research Study submitted to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) referenced in the October 2003 EFT Market Research Study Supporting Statement for Paper Work Reduction Act (PRA) Submission (OMB Control #1510-0074).

Methodology

To accomplish the objectives above, KRC Research will conduct 1,800 15-minute telephone interviews among a random sample of SSA and SSI check recipients as follows:

- 600 unbanked SSA benefit recipients.
- 600 unbanked SSI benefit recipients.
- 300 banked SSA benefit recipients.
- 300 banked SSI benefit recipients.

The survey will be translated into Spanish and we will have bilingual interviews to conduct the survey among Spanish speaking benefit recipients.

Given the Direct Express® card is primarily designed for unbanked benefit recipients we plan to conduct more interviews among those audiences to enable us to look at subgroups such as ethnicity, region, urban versus rural, et cetera. We will conduct fewer interviews among banked benefit recipients, but wish to understand their reactions to the Direct Express® Card and its benefits. This will allow FMS to determine the amount of resources, if any, to dedicate to communicating specifically with these audiences.

FMS/Treasury understands that this methodology will under represent those check recipients that do not have telephones. As was true three years ago, and last year, when KRC Research conducted telephone surveys among these audiences, we feel that a telephone survey is the best option to conduct research among this audience because:

- Audiences that will be underrepresented in a telephone survey are the hardest to reach and convert to direct deposit and make up only a very small percentage of those to whom we will target our efforts. Therefore, we are confident a telephone survey will fully meet our needs.
- A mail survey would be the only other option for this kind of study. For our purposes a mail survey is not feasible because it would significantly increase costs and the time taken to complete the research. Also, a mail survey of this nature would take eight to ten weeks to complete, which would make any results we received too late to influence the immediate needs of the campaign. Further, response rates for mail surveys, unless some type of incentive is included, often have lower response rates than phone surveys.

A telephone sample of this nature will fully meet our research objectives, which is to determine the efficacy of key messages among those most likely and able to benefit from the Direct Express® Card.

Estimated Burden Hours

Completing 1,800 interviews among Social Security and SSI check recipients is expected to take a total of approximately 472.5 hours of time for those who are contacted and participate in the survey or screening process.

This time estimate is based on completing 1,800 15-minute interviews $(1,800 \times 15 \text{ minutes})/60 = 450$ hours.

We anticipate an incidence of approximately 40 percent for the entire study so we estimate making an additional 2,700 contacts who will be read an introduction and asked screening questions to determine qualification to participate in the survey but do not qualify. Each contact should last approximately 30 seconds. Therefore, in addition to the 450 hours of interviewing, there will be 22.5 hours for those who are contacted and do not participate.

$2,700 \text{ contacts} \times \frac{1}{2} \text{ minute}/60 = 22.5 \text{ hours}$

Contact

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