

**Attachment 1:
Recruitment Announcement
Screening Guide (Participant Screener)
Confirmation Letters
Reminder Phone Script**

Attachment 1: Recruitment Announcement for Deaf & Hard of Hearing Focus Groups

Recruitment Announcement Deaf & Hard of Hearing Taxpayer Focus Groups

Tell Us What You Think!

Provide Input into Tax Services for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing

ICF Macro, working with the IRS, wants to find out how to improve federal tax services and federal tax preparation assistance to deaf and hard of hearing taxpayers. This is your opportunity to share your feedback and input. Through a series of in-person focus groups, we are gathering the thoughts and opinions of people like you to learn about the difficulties you face in getting answers and assistance with your tax issues.

You Can Be a Part of It! Here is What You Need to Know:

- The focus groups are being held on [DATE] at [FACILITY] in [CITY].
- The discussions will take no longer than 2 hours.
- Approximately 8 people will be assigned to each group, allowing for an in-depth discussion.
- If you have contacted the IRS for assistance in the past year, your experiences would be helpful to the discussion. If you have not contacted the IRS for assistance, your thoughts about this will be helpful.
- **You will receive \$75** in appreciation for your time and participation. This check will be given to you immediately following the focus group.
- **Hard of hearing individuals** are eligible to participate in the group being held at 5:00pm. A speaking moderator will facilitate the discussion, with the assistance of Computer Assisted Real Time (CART) captioning. Assistive listening devices will also be provided.
- **Deaf individuals** are eligible to participate in the group being held at 7:30pm. A deaf moderator fluent in American Sign Language (ASL) will facilitate the discussion and allow everyone the opportunity to communicate.
- **To be eligible to participate**, you must have either a severe hearing loss or be deaf, be between 18 and 67 years old, and have filed a federal tax return for both 2007 and 2008.

If you would like to be a part of this discussion, please contact ICF Macro at [PHONE #] (toll-free) or [EMAIL ADDRESS] no later than [CUT-OFF RECRUITING DATE]. **Spaces are extremely limited**, so please contact ICF Macro quickly to reserve your spot.

**Attachment 1: Participant Screener
for Deaf & Hard of Hearing Focus Groups**

**Screening Guide (Participant Screener)
Deaf & Hard of Hearing Taxpayer Focus Groups**

Note: Potential participants will be calling in on an 800 line to ICF Macro.

[After initial phone greeting:]

Thanks so much for calling. As you know, we are currently recruiting deaf and hard of hearing taxpayers to participate in focus groups. The purpose of the group discussions is to help the IRS learn more about your experiences and perceptions of getting assistance with filing your taxes. This will ultimately help the IRS provide better and more useful assistance to the deaf and hard of hearing communities.

We would like to ask you a few questions to find out more about you. We ask everyone the same questions, and your answers will tell us if this discussion will be relevant to you and will help us make sure we have a good mix of participants in the groups. Once we have placed everyone in a group, we will call you back with the date, time, and location.

Do you have about 5 minutes to answer a few questions? *[If no, ask when would be a good time to call them and get phone number].*

Let me first explain that the information we are collecting through these questions, and also during the focus groups, will go into a secure database. I want to assure you that your information will be kept completely private. We don't share this with anyone, including the IRS. We report all information in summary, without individuals' names, and the information is used for purposes of this study only.

So let's get started with the questions:

1. First, what is your name? [FIRST AND LAST NAMES]

[CONFIRM GENDER IF UNSURE BASED ON NAME AND VOICE, IF APPLICABLE]

2. Are you calling from the Washington DC area or the Los Angeles area?

DC..... CONTINUE

LA..... CONTINUE

NEITHER..... TERMINATE

3. Are you deaf, hard of hearing, or neither?

DEAF..... SKIP TO Q5

HARD OF HEARING..... CONTINUE TO Q4

NEITHER..... TERMINATE

4. [IF HARD OF HEARING] Do you have a hearing aid or cochlear implant, or do you use any assistive listening device on a regular basis to follow the conversation of other people without using sign language (ASL)?

[FYI ..some deaf people use hearing aids or cochlear implants; but these devices do not help to follow other people's conversation without using ASL or depending on CAN or writing]

YES..... SKIP TO Q6

**Attachment 1: Participant Screener
for Deaf & Hard of Hearing Focus Groups**

- NO..... TERMINATE
DON'T KNOW..... TERMINATE
5. [IF DEAF] Are you fluent in ASL?
YES..... CONTINUE
NO..... TERMINATE
6. Has anyone else in your household already qualified to participate in this focus group?
YES..... TERMINATE
NO..... CONTINUE
7. Which of the following includes your age?
Under 18..... TERMINATE
18-34..... CONTINUE
35-44..... CONTINUE
45-54..... CONTINUE
55-67..... CONTINUE
68 or over..... TERMINATE
8. Do you work in any of the following fields?
Tax preparation services..... TERMINATE
Market research..... TERMINATE
Management consulting..... TERMINATE
The IRS..... TERMINATE
NONE OF THE ABOVE..... CONTINUE
9. Have you participated in a focus group in the last 3 months?
YES..... TERMINATE
NO..... CONTINUE
10. Did you file a federal tax return for 2007 AND 2008?
YES..... CONTINUE
NO..... TERMINATE
11. Did you use one of the following forms: Form 1040, 1040A, or 1040EZ?
YES..... CONTINUE
NO..... TERMINATE
DON'T KNOW..... TERMINATE
12. Have you contacted the IRS for assistance in the past 12 months? This can include calling the IRS, visiting an IRS office, or visiting the IRS website.
YES..... CONTINUE (AIM FOR 65% OF PARTICIPANTS)
NO..... CONTINUE

**Attachment 1: Participant Screener
for Deaf & Hard of Hearing Focus Groups**

13. Did you prepare your 2008 tax return yourself or did someone else prepare it for you, such as a paid tax preparer, a volunteer, or a friend or relative?
SELF-PREPARED.....CONTINUE
SOMEONE ELSE PREPARED.....SKIP TO Q15
14. [IF SELF-PREPARED] Did you prepare your 2008 tax return using tax software or using pencil and paper?
TAX SOFTWARE
PENCIL & PAPER
15. Did you file your 2008 tax return electronically or by mail?
ELECTRONICALLY
MAIL
DON'T KNOW
16. What was your filing status on your most recent tax return? Was it...
Single,
Married, filing jointly,
Married, filing separately,
Head of household, or
Qualifying Widow/widower with dependent child?
17. Now I have just a few demographic questions for you. This information helps us make sure we have a good mix of participants with different backgrounds. First, what is the highest level of education you have completed? Is it...
Some high school,
High school diploma or GED,
Some college or Associate's degree,
Bachelor's degree, or
Graduate or Professional degree (such as M.S., Ph.D. or J.D.)
18. Are you of Hispanic or Latino origin?
YES
NO
19. What is your race? Would you say it is...
White,
Black or African American,
Asian,
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, or
American Indian or Alaska Native?

**Attachment 1: Participant Screener
for Deaf & Hard of Hearing Focus Groups**

20. Which of the following categories includes your total annual household income?
Less than \$35,000,
\$35,000 to less than \$50,000,
\$50,000 to less than \$75,000, or
\$75,000 or more
21. Finally, could you please tell me your phone number and email address? Again, these will only be used to communicate with you about the focus group and will be kept completely private.
- PHONE NUMBER
EMAIL ADDRESS

Thank you very much. These are all of the questions I have for you right now. As I mentioned, we will be taking calls from interested individuals until *[date]*. Once we have developed the schedule of focus groups, based on what people tell us are the best times for holding the discussions, we will give you a call and send a confirmation to you with the date, time and call-in information for your group.

We are very happy that you are interested in this opportunity to share your thoughts, opinions, and experiences with us. We know that what is learned from the focus group discussions will be very valuable to the IRS as they look for ways to enhance their services to the deaf and hard of hearing communities.

Do you have any questions for me?

Once again, thanks for calling. We will be in touch again soon.

**Attachment 1: Confirmation Letters
for Deaf & Hard of Hearing Focus Groups**

**Confirmation Letters
(Follow up Letters or Emails to Screened Participants)
Deaf & Hard of Hearing Taxpayer Focus Groups**

Selected to Participate:

Dear _____;

It was a pleasure to talk with you about the study we are conducting for the IRS with deaf and hard of hearing taxpayers. We would like to invite you to participate in the focus group being held on October ____, 2009 from [5:00 to 7:00 pm., hard of hearing] or [7:30 to 9:30 pm., deaf].

The focus group will last for no more than 2 hours and a moderator will lead the discussion. The group will be limited to 8 participants so that everyone has the chance to participate. [For Deaf participants only] The moderator will be fluent in American Sign Language (ASL) and all participants will use (ASL) as well. [For hard of hearing participants only] CART services equipment and assistive listening devices will be provided during the focus group for all participants.

The location of the focus group is: [For MD/DC/VA area groups]

Shugoll Research
7475 Wisconsin Avenue, Suite 200
Bethesda, MD 20814
301-656-0310

A driving map and instructions for reaching the location via metro rail are attached to this letter for your information.

If you need any further information about the focus groups, please call Julia Sumner at ICF Macro, 301-572-0550.

We are looking forward to meeting you.

Sincerely,

Bonnie S. Bates
Project Manager

Julia Sumner
Research Associate

[Letter will appear on ICF Macro Letterhead]

**Attachment 1: Confirmation Letters
for Deaf & Hard of Hearing Focus Groups**

Not Selected to Participate

Dear _____;

It was a pleasure to talk with you about the study we are doing for the IRS with deaf and hard of hearing taxpayers. Unfortunately, we were not able to assign you to a focus group because we have already filled the groups. We had a tremendous response to the announcement about the study and keeping the groups small allows us to have an in-depth discussion about the topic of barriers to communication about taxpayer needs and ways to improve services.

We appreciate your interest in the project and willingness to participate.

If you have any further questions about this study, please call Julia Sumner at ICF Macro, 301-572-0550.

Sincerely,

Bonnie S. Bates
Project Manager

Julia Sumner
Research Associate

[Letter will appear on ICF Macro Letterhead]

**Attachment 1: Reminder Phone Script
for Deaf & Hard of Hearing Focus Groups**

**Reminder Phone Script
Deaf & Hard of Hearing Taxpayer Focus Groups**

**Reminder Email or Phone Call
(Two days before the assigned focus group)**

Hello _____;

This is _____ from ICF Macro. I just wanted to remind you about the focus group we have you signed up for tomorrow, October _____, 2009. Your group will take place from [5:00 to 7:00 pm., hard of hearing] or [7:30 to 9:30 pm., deaf].

The location of the focus group is: [For MD/DC/VA area groups]
Shugoll Research
7475 Wisconsin Avenue, Suite 200
Bethesda, MD 20814
301-656-0310

A driving map and instructions for reaching the location via metro rail are attached to this letter for your information [email].

If you have any difficulties or if you cannot attend the focus group, please contact the focus group facility at the number listed above, since we may not be in our office before the focus groups begin.

We look forward to meeting you.

Sincerely,

Bonnie S. Bates
Project Manager

Julia Sumner
Research Associate

[Letter will appear on ICF Macro Letterhead]

Attachment 2: Moderator's Guides

- 1) Focus Group Moderator's Guide for Deaf Participants
- 2) Focus Group Moderator's Guide for Hard of Hearing Participants

Focus Group Moderator's Guide Deaf Participants

INTRODUCTION

Hello, and thank you for taking the time to be here! My name is _____, and I work for ICF Macro and I am going to be leading our discussion today. I want to take a few minutes to tell you what you can expect over the next 2 hours. After that, I will give you the chance to introduce yourselves and we can get into the discussion.

The topic for this discussion is communicating with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). The goal is to learn more about how to meet your needs for assistance with your federal income taxes from the IRS. Your opinions are important and will help the IRS improve services to deaf taxpayers.

As the group leader, I am not part of IRS. I do not have a particular point of view regarding the questions I will ask you. I am here to listen to your honest opinions about issues of concern and importance to you and to guide the discussion. There are no right or wrong answers to any of the questions.

The discussion here will be kept strictly private. We will not report your comments by name in any reports, and we ask that you respect one another's privacy in the same way.

For the IRS to get information from the public, they are required to have approval from the Office of Management and Budget. Their approval number for this project is 1545-1349. If you have any comments regarding the time estimates associated with this study or suggestions on making this process simpler, please write to the: IRS Tax Products Coordinating Committee, 1111 Constitution Avenue, NW, IR-6526, Washington, DC 20224.

[Briefly review the Informed Consent Form.]

Just as a reminder, we will be making a transcript of the discussion so that we can have an accurate record of the information you share. Please identify yourself by your first name only when speaking.

We do have a representative from the IRS and from my organization with us today. They are in the observation room so they can take their own notes and hear the discussion for themselves.

I'd like to review a few groundrules that will help keep our discussion flowing. Please:

- Speak one at a time
- I'll make sure that everyone who wants to has a chance to speak
- You do not have to answer every question
- It is ok to disagree, different opinions are helpful for us to hear
- Treat everyone with respect
- Try to keep your answers brief and focused on the question

Attachment 2: Moderator Guides Deaf & Hard of Hearing Focus Groups

Can everyone agree to these groundrules?
Do you have any questions before we get started?

WARMUP/INTRODUCTIONS

Please introduce yourself (first name only, please) and tell us why you volunteered to participate in this study.

**Research Question #2. What tax issues did they discuss on which tax service channel?
Note: This question will be asked for each service channel.**

I. WHY DID YOU CONTACT IRS FOR ASSISTANCE?

1. **People need help with various problems related to federal income taxes. How many of you contacted the IRS in the last year? [Moderator, count the number of hands]**
2. **Tell me the reasons you contacted the IRS for help or assistance in the past year. Just tell us about the main reason you contacted the IRS, you don't need to provide the details. For example: you needed a form; you had a question about correspondence you received from the IRS; etc.**

[Moderator - The purpose of this is to get them thinking about their prior contact with IRS. First we want them to recall why they contacted us then we are going to ask about the specific type of contact or service they chose (face-to-face, phone, Internet).]

This is a list of common reasons why people may contact IRS (it is not all-inclusive). Moderator can use as probes to generate feedback (can be used for all different types of service).

- *Needed a form or publication*
 - *Received notice/correspondence from the IRS*
 - *Tax Return Preparation Assistance*
 - *Tax law questions*
 - *IRS tax refund information*
 - *Getting prior year return information (i.e., to obtain a transcript or record of tax information from a prior tax return)*
 - *Getting information about payments (i.e., where to send a payment or how to establish an installment agreement)*
 - *Applying for a Taxpayer ID Number or an Employer ID Number*
 - *Other tax problems that you tried to get help; specify:*
-

Transition -

Now we are going to discuss the different types of IRS services. These include:

- **Walk-in and other types of face-to-face service**
- **Telephone service, including automated and human assistance**

Attachment 2: Moderator Guides Deaf & Hard of Hearing Focus Groups

- IRS Website and IRS Website chat mode

I'm interested in the IRS service assistance you sought out in the last year. We are going to discuss each type of service individually. We will start off with face-to-face service and later discuss telephone and Internet service.

II. IRS WALK-IN SERVICE (face-to-face)

3. **Did you visit an IRS Walk-In office to receive face-to-face assistance within the last year?** [ask for show of hands and then address those participants who had visited an IRS Walk-In office]
4. **For those of you who visited an IRS Walk-In office, did you ask for a sign language interpreter?**
If yes, were you provided a sign language interpreter?

6. **How did you communicate with the Walk-In office representative?** [Responses could include the following types of responses - again, this is not an all-inclusive list]:

- *Writing each other,*
- *Talking each other,*
- *Writing myself and talking by representative (lip reading),*
- *Talking myself and writing by representative,*
- *Using sign language by both,*
- *Using sign language interpreter (in person),*
- *Other (specify_____)*

Research Question #1. What problems/barriers are encountered by deaf taxpayers on which tax service channels. Note: This question will be asked for each service channel.

7. What problems/barriers did you encounter when you sought Walk-In (face-to-face) service? *Probe for different problems/barriers.*

8. Were there communication problems? *Moderator can use the following probes to encourage discussion.*

English language problems

The representative did not understand my questions/needs.

I did not understand what the representative answered or explained.

Knowledge problem

The representative did not know the answer.

The representative did not have the correct information.

Personnel - The representative was unfriendly and not cooperative

Special Needs

No sign language interpreter

Other reason - specify:_____

Research Question #2. What were the outcomes on each service channel? Note: This question will be asked for each service channel.

9. What was the outcome of your assistance? Were you successful, did you get the service you needed?

Attachment 2: Moderator Guides Deaf & Hard of Hearing Focus Groups

Successful

Partially Successful

Unsuccessful

10. Find out why they rated as they did.

Probes –

What does that outcome mean to you? (i.e., Why did you rate it Partially Successful? What would have made it Successful? What does Successful mean to you?)

Did you get all of your questions answered?

Did you get what you needed?

What could you have done to improve the outcome? What could IRS have done to improve the outcome?

Research Question #3. What are their suggestions to improve tax assistance service channels?

11. What recommendations would you suggest to solve problems or barriers in face-to-face interaction? What would make the interaction better for deaf people?

These are some types of comments you may hear:

- Make appointment and provide sign language interpreter*
- Walk-In office representatives take deaf and hard of hearing awareness training*
- Other suggestions - specify _____*

OTHER FACE-TO-FACE SERVICE

There are a couple other types of face-to-face service that I want to discuss with you.

12. How did you get your tax return prepared last year?

Moderator can use the following probes to encourage responses. How many of you

...

- self-prepared your return*
- used paid-preparer*
- used friend or relative*
- for free at a volunteer site*

13. If you used paid-preparer or friend/relative, how did you communicate with them in preparing your tax return?

- They provided interpreter*
- Brought family member or friend to interpret*
- Wrote each other for communication*
- Other _____*

USED PAID PREPARER

14. If you used a paid-preparer, are you aware that you can get free tax return preparation from volunteers at Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites (for those with limited family income up to \$49,000) including AARP?

**Attachment 2: Moderator Guides
Deaf & Hard of Hearing Focus Groups**

15. How do you feel about getting free tax preparation from volunteers? Would you do this?

- o Why?
- o Why not?

16. If you were to think about having your return prepared for free by volunteers at a site in your city, what types of assistive services would you expect to be available at the site to meet your communication needs? (Interpreter, writing, volunteer who can sign,).

VOLUNTEER SERVICE

17. During the last year have you sought assistance from a Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) site? [ask for show of hands and record count] or have you sought assistance from a Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) or AARP site? [ask for show of hands and record count].

If yes, did you ask for a sign language interpreter? [ask separately for VITA and for TCE]

If yes, were you provided a sign language interpreter by VITA or TCE?

If no, how did you communicate with them in preparing your tax return?

- Brought family member or friend to interpret
- Wrote each other for communication
- Other _____

18. What was the outcome of your assistance? Were you successful, did you get the service you needed?

Successful Partially Successful Unsuccessful

19. Find out why they rated as they did.

Probes –

What does that outcome mean to you? (i.e., Why did you rate it Partially Successful? What would have made it Successful? What does Successful mean to you?)

Did you get all of your questions answered?

Did you get what you needed?

What could you have done to improve the outcome? What could IRS have done to improve the outcome?

20. What recommendations would you suggest to solve problems or barriers in face-to-face interactions at volunteer sites? What would make the interaction better for deaf people?

Attachment 2: Moderator Guides Deaf & Hard of Hearing Focus Groups

III. IRS TOLL-FREE TELEPHONE

Next, we are moving on to the IRS Toll-Free Telephone.

21. How many of you used the Toll-Free phone line and automated menu service in the past year? *[ask for show of hands and record count]*
22. What was the reason you sought service when you used the Toll-Free telephone line? *[Moderator, if you need probes, use the same problem list from face-to-face service.]*

Because some of the phone service is automated and other requires a human I am going to ask you about these two types of service experiences separately. Let's start with your experience with the Toll-Free automated service and later we will discuss human assistance.

IRS TOLL-FREE TELEPHONE - AUTOMATED SERVICE

23. Did you encounter any problems with the Toll-Free automated service?
24. If you used TTY relay service, tell me how that worked out for you.
 - o Probe – Ask about the automated menu information and making selection through TTY relay service.
 - o Probe – Did you understand the information provided by the selected (automated) service?
 - o Probe – Were you successful in finding the answer or information you were seeking?
25. What was the outcome of your assistance? Were you successful, did you get the service you needed?
Successful Partially Successful Unsuccessful
26. Find out why they rated as they did.
Probes –
 - What does that outcome mean to you? (i.e., Why did you rate it Partially Successful? What would have made it Successful? What does Successful mean to you?)
 - Did you get all of your questions answered?
 - Did you get what you needed?
 - What could you have done to improve the outcome? What could IRS have done to improve the outcome?
27. What recommendations would you suggest to solve problems or barriers in IRS Toll-Free Automated Service? What would make the interaction better for deaf people?

IRS TOLL-FREE TELEPHONE - HUMAN ASSISTANCE

Now we will move on to Toll-Free human assistance.

**Attachment 2: Moderator Guides
Deaf & Hard of Hearing Focus Groups**

28. During the last year did you use Toll-Free phone line and communicate with a Customer Service Representative (CSR)?

29. What was the reason or tax problem that caused you to contact IRS? [for probes, use the problem list previously used]

30. Did you encounter any problems with the Toll-Free service with the CSR? Tell me about your experience.

If necessary probe, they may mention things like the following:

- *Waited too long for CSR and had to hang up.*
- *Could not reach the right CSR and get answer/assistance.*
- *Difficult to understand what the CSR said through TTY relay service.*
- *The CSR did not understand my question.*
- *The CSR did not know the answer or could not provide assistance.*

31. What was the outcome of your assistance? Were you successful, did you get the service you needed?

Successful Partially Successful Unsuccessful

32. Find out why they rated as they did.

Probes –

What does that outcome mean to you? (i.e., Why did you rate it Partially Successful? What would have made it Successful? What does Successful mean to you?)

Did you get all of your questions answered?

Did you get what you needed?

What could you have done to improve the outcome? What could IRS have done to improve the outcome?

33. What recommendations would you suggest to solve problems or barriers in IRS Toll-Free Assistance with the CSR? What would make the interaction better for deaf people?

They may mention things like:

- *Reduce waiting/holding time to reach the CSR.*
- *CSRs should take deaf and hard of hearing awareness and communication support training (emphasis on explaining in simple words and short sentences while talking to deaf caller through relay operator).*
- *CSRs need more training on tax laws.*
- *Set up Video Relay Service (VRS) and publish VRS phone #*
- *Set up Video Phone (VP) System and publish VP #.*

IV. IRS WEBSITE (www.irs.gov)

34. During the last year did you use the IRS website (www.irs.gov)?

Attachment 2: Moderator Guides Deaf & Hard of Hearing Focus Groups

35. What was the reason or tax problem that caused you to visit the IRS website? [for probes, use the problem list previously used]

36. Did you encounter any problems with the IRS Website? If so, tell us about them.

If necessary probe to generate discussion, they may mention things like the following:

- *Website information is hard to understand.*
- *Website navigation is difficult.*
- *Search engine is difficult.*

37. What was the outcome of your assistance? Were you successful, did you get the service you needed?

Successful Partially Successful Unsuccessful

38. Find out why they rated as they did.

Probes –

What does that outcome mean to you? (i.e., Why did you rate it Partially Successful? What would have made it Successful? What does Successful mean to you?)

Did you get all of your questions answered?

Did you get what you needed?

What could you have done to improve the outcome? What could IRS have done to improve the outcome?

39. What recommendations would you suggest to solve problems or barriers in the IRS Website? What would make the interaction better for deaf people?

Depending on responses above, they may mention things like the following:

- *Make the information on the website easy to understand.*
- *Make the navigation easy.*
- *Expand the information base on the website.*
- *Improve the search engine.*

IRS WEBSITE - CHAT MODE

We are now going to move our discussion on to another part of the IRS Website.

40. During the past year did you use the IRS website to communicate with an IRS representative in *chat mode or instant messaging* for your tax questions?

41. What was the reason or tax problem that caused you to communicate with the representative on the website? [for probes, use the problem list previously used]

42. Did you encounter any problems with the IRS Website Chat/Instant Messaging? If so, tell us about them.

If necessary probe, they may mention things like the following:

- *Difficult to understand what the representative typed on the website.*

Attachment 2: Moderator Guides Deaf & Hard of Hearing Focus Groups

- *The representative could not understand my question.*
- *The representative could not find the answer or information I was looking for.*
- *I did not receive a response from the representative on the website.*

43. What was the outcome of your assistance? Were you successful, did you get the service you needed?

Successful Partially Successful Unsuccessful

44. Find out why they rated as they did.

Probes –

What does that outcome mean to you? (i.e., Why did you rate it Partially Successful? What would have made it Successful? What does Successful mean to you?)

Did you get all of your questions answered?

Did you get what you needed?

What could you have done to improve the outcome? What could IRS have done to improve the outcome?

45. What recommendations would you suggest to solve problems or barriers in IRS Website using Chat or Instant Messaging? What would make the interaction better for deaf people?

V. PRIORITY IN TYPE OF SERVICE

46. Now that we have talked about all the types of services, tell us what type of service is your top priority or most needed and what could make that type of service most effective for you?

Probes:

Why do you feel that type of service is top priority?

What makes it your top priority?

Which type of service is your second top priority and why?

Research Question #4. Which educational packages should be translated in sign language on tax credit, deductions, and free tax services?

VI. EDUCATIONAL PACKAGES

IRS has partnered with National Association of the Deaf (NAD) and produced several public service announcement videos in American Sign Language (ASL) and also open captioned on different tax topics. These videos can be viewed on the website www.NAD.org (click on ‘IRS Tax Tips’).

47. Have you seen any of these videos? [If anyone has seen the videos, ask] “What did you think of them?”

Tax Tip Videos in ASL

Attachment 2: Moderator Guides Deaf & Hard of Hearing Focus Groups

Direct Deposit
Top Return Mistakes
E-File
Careers at the IRS
Undelivered Refunds
Standard Deduction for Non-Itemizers
IRS e-File Requires e-Signature
New in 2009
Why e-File?
IRS Information Now Available in Spanish
All About IRS.gov
Tax Scams
Charitable Contributions
Dirty Dozen
What If?
First-Time Homebuyer Credit
General Recovery (ARRA) Message
Recovery Rebate Credit

Look at this list *[Think about what to do with this last question. Could have on a handout or written on a flipchart Also consider a sentence or two providing an explanation on what each of these are so participants will know what we are asking them] –*

**48. Select your top two topics that you think should be translated into ASL?
Which do you recommend be translated in ASL.**

Earned Income Tax Credit
Child credit
Education credit
Free Filing
Health Coverage Tax Credit
VITA and TCE programs

**49. Are there other topics that should be translated in ASL? What topics?
(specify_____)**

VII. CLOSURE AND THANK YOU

**This concludes our discussion for today. We appreciate your participation very much.
You will receive your stipend on your way out.**

Attachment 2: Moderator Guides Deaf & Hard of Hearing Focus Groups

Focus Group Moderator's Guide Hard of Hearing Participants

INTRODUCTION

Hello, and thank you for taking the time to be here! My name is _____, and I work for ICF Macro and I am going to be leading our discussion today. I want to take a few minutes to tell you what you can expect over the next 2 hours. After that, I will give you the chance to introduce yourselves and we can get into the discussion.

The topic for this discussion is communicating with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). The goal is to learn more about how to meet your needs for assistance with your federal income taxes from the IRS. Your opinions are important and will help the IRS improve services to hard of hearing taxpayers.

As the group leader, I am not part of IRS. I do not have a particular point of view regarding the questions I will ask you. I am here to listen to your honest opinions about issues of concern and importance to you and to guide the discussion. There are no right or wrong answers to any of the questions.

The discussion here will be kept strictly private. We will not report your comments by name in any reports, and we ask that you respect one another's privacy in the same way.

For the IRS to get information from the public, they are required to have approval from the Office of Management and Budget. Their approval number for this project is 1545-1349. If you have any comments regarding the time estimates associated with this study or suggestions on making this process simpler, please write to the: IRS Tax Products Coordinating Committee, 1111 Constitution Avenue, NW, IR-6526, Washington, DC 20224.

[Briefly review the Informed Consent Form.]

Just as a reminder, we will be making a transcript of the discussion so that we can have an accurate record of the information you share. Please identify yourself by your first name only when speaking.

We do have a representative from the IRS and from my organization with us today. They are in the observation room so they can take their own notes and hear the discussion for themselves.

I'd like to review a few groundrules that will help keep our discussion flowing. Please:

- Speak one at a time
- I'll make sure that everyone who wants to has a chance to speak
- You do not have to answer every question
- It is ok to disagree, different opinions are helpful for us to hear
- Treat everyone with respect

Attachment 2: Moderator Guides Deaf & Hard of Hearing Focus Groups

- Try to keep your answers brief and focused on the question

Can everyone agree to these groundrules?

Do you have any questions before we get started?

WARMUP/INTRODUCTIONS

Please introduce yourself (first name only, please) and tell us why you volunteered to participate in this study.

Research Question #2. What tax issues did they discuss on which tax service channel?

Note: This question will be asked for each service channel.

I. WHY DID YOU CONTACT IRS FOR ASSISTANCE?

1. **People need help with various problems related to federal income taxes. How many of you contacted the IRS in the last year? [Moderator, count the number of hands]**
2. **Tell me the reasons you contacted the IRS for help or assistance in the past year. Just tell us about the main reason you contacted the IRS, you don't need to provide the details. For example: you needed a form; you had a question about correspondence you received from the IRS; etc.**

[Moderator - The purpose of this is to get them thinking about their prior contact with IRS. First we want them to recall why they contacted us then we are going to ask about the specific type of contact or service they chose (face-to-face, phone, Internet).]

This is a list of common reasons why people may contact IRS (it is not all-inclusive). Moderator can use as probes to generate feedback (can be used for all different types of service).

- *Needed a form or publication*
 - *Received notice/correspondence from the IRS*
 - *Tax Return Preparation Assistance*
 - *Tax law questions*
 - *IRS tax refund information*
 - *Getting prior year return information (i.e., to obtain a transcript or record of tax information from a prior tax return)*
 - *Getting information about payments (i.e., where to send a payment or how to establish an installment agreement)*
 - *Applying for a Taxpayer ID Number or an Employer ID Number*
 - *Other tax problems that you tried to get help; specify:*
-

Transition -

Now we are going to discuss the different types of IRS services. These include:

- **Walk-in and other types of face-to-face service**

Attachment 2: Moderator Guides Deaf & Hard of Hearing Focus Groups

- Telephone service, including automated and human assistance
- IRS Website and IRS Website chat mode

I'm interested in the IRS service assistance you sought out in the last year. We are going to discuss each type of service individually. We will start off with face-to-face service and later discuss telephone and Internet service.

II. IRS WALK-IN SERVICE (face-to-face)

3. Did you visit an IRS Walk-In office to receive face-to-face assistance within the last year? [ask for show of hands and then address those participants who had visited an IRS Walk-In office]

4. For those of you who visited an IRS Walk-In office, did you ask for assistive service such as assistive listening device (Pocket talker, etc.) or computer assisted note taking?

5. Were you provided assistive service?

6. How many of you did not need any assistive service because of your own hearing aids?

7. How did you communicate with the Walk-In office representative? [Responses could include the following types of responses - again, this is not an all-inclusive list]:

- *Writing each other,*
- *Talking each other,*
- *Writing myself and talking by representative (lip reading),*
- *Talking myself and writing by representative,*
- *Using own hearing aids and talking each other,*
- *Using assistive listening device provided by the IRS,*
- *Other (specify_____)*

Research Question #1. What problems/barriers are encountered by deaf taxpayers on which tax service channels. Note: This question will be asked for each service channel.

8. What problems/barriers did you encounter when you sought Walk-In (face-to-face) service? *Probe for different problems/barriers.*

9. Were there communication problems? *Moderator can use the following probes to encourage discussion.*

English language problems

o The representative did not understand my questions/needs.

o I did not understand what the representative answered or explained.

Knowledge problem

o The representative did not know the answer.

o The representative did not have the correct information.

Personnel - The representative was unfriendly and not cooperative

Special Needs

o No assistive listening device

o Other reason - specify:_____

Attachment 2: Moderator Guides Deaf & Hard of Hearing Focus Groups

Research Question #2. What were the outcomes on each service channel? Note: This question will be asked for each service channel.

10. What was the outcome of your assistance? Were you successful, did you get the service you needed?

Successful Partially Successful Unsuccessful

11. Find out why they rated as they did.

Probes –

What does that outcome mean to you? (i.e., Why did you rate it Partially Successful? What would have made it Successful? What does Successful mean to you?)

Did you get all of your questions answered?

Did you get what you needed?

What could you have done to improve the outcome? What could IRS have done to improve the outcome?

Research Question #3. What are their suggestions to improve tax assistance service channels?

12. What recommendations would you suggest to solve problems or barriers in face-to-face interaction? What would make the interaction better for hard of hearing people?

These are some types of comments you may hear:

- o Make appointment and provide assistive listening device (ALD) or computer assisted note (CAN) taking service*
- o Walk-In office representatives take deaf and hard of hearing awareness training*
- o Other suggestions - specify _____*

OTHER FACE-TO-FACE SERVICE

There are a couple other types of face-to-face service that I want to discuss with you.

13. How did you get your tax return prepared last year?

Moderator can use the following probes to encourage responses. How many of you ...

- o self-prepared your return*
- o used paid-preparer*
- o used friend or relative*
- o for free at a volunteer site*

14. If you used paid-preparer or friend/relative, how did you communicate with them in preparing your tax return?

- o They provided assistive listening device (ALD) or computer assisted note (CAN) taking service.*
- o Brought family member or friend to facilitate communication*
- o Wrote each other for communication*
- o Other _____*

Attachment 2: Moderator Guides
Deaf & Hard of Hearing Focus Groups

USED PAID PREPARER

- 15. If you used a paid-preparer, are you aware that you can get free tax return preparation from volunteers at Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites (for those with limited family income up to \$49,000) including AARP?**
- 16. How do you feel about getting free tax preparation from volunteers? Would you do this?**
- o Why?
 - o Why not?
- 17. If you were to think about having your return prepared for free by volunteers at a site in your city, what types of assistive services would you expect to be available at the site to meet your communication needs? (ALD, CAN, writing,).**

VOLUNTEER SERVICE

- 18. During the last year have you sought assistance from a Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) site? [ask for show of hands and record count] or have you sought assistance from a Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) or AARP site? [ask for show of hands and record count].**

If yes, did you ask for ALD or CAN? *[ask separately for VITA and for TCE]*

If yes, were you provided ALD or CAN by VITA or TCE?

If no, how did you communicate with them in preparing your tax return?

- Brought family member or friend to facilitate communication.
- Wrote each other for communication
- Other _____

- 19. What was the outcome of your assistance? Were you successful, did you get the service you needed?**

Successful Partially Successful Unsuccessful

- 20. Find out why they rated as they did.**

Probes –

What does that outcome mean to you? (i.e., Why did you rate it Partially Successful? What would have made it Successful? What does Successful mean to you?)

Did you get all of your questions answered?

Did you get what you needed?

What could you have done to improve the outcome? What could IRS have done to improve the outcome?

**Attachment 2: Moderator Guides
Deaf & Hard of Hearing Focus Groups**

- 21.** What recommendations would you suggest to solve problems or barriers in face-to-face interactions at volunteer sites? What would make the interaction better for **hard of hearing** people?

III. IRS TOLL-FREE TELEPHONE

Next, we are moving on to the IRS Toll-Free Telephone.

- 22.** How many of you used the Toll-Free phone line and automated menu service in the past year? *[ask for show of hands and record count]*
- 23.** What was the reason you sought service when you used the Toll-Free telephone line? *[Moderator, if you need probes, use the same problem list from face-to-face service.]*

Because some of the phone service is automated and other requires a human I am going to ask you about these two types of service experiences separately. Let's start with your experience with the Toll-Free automated service and later we will discuss human assistance.

IRS TOLL-FREE TELEPHONE - AUTOMATED SERVICE

- 24.** Did you encounter any problems with the Toll-Free automated service? What were they?
- 25.** If you used TTY relay service, tell me how that worked out for you.
- o Probe – Ask about the automated menu information and making selection through Telecommunication relay service.
 - o Probe – Did you understand the information provided by the selected (automated) service?
 - o Probe – Were you successful in finding the answer or information you were seeking?
- 26.** What was the outcome of your assistance? Were you successful, did you get the service you needed?
- Successful Partially Successful Unsuccessful
- 27.** Find out why they rated as they did.
- Probes –
- What does that outcome mean to you? (i.e., Why did you rate it Partially Successful? What would have made it Successful? What does Successful mean to you?)
 - Did you get all of your questions answered?
 - Did you get what you needed?
 - What could you have done to improve the outcome? What could IRS have done to improve the outcome?
- 28.** What recommendations would you suggest to solve problems or barriers in IRS Toll-Free Automated Service? What would make the interaction better for **hard of hearing** people?

Attachment 2: Moderator Guides Deaf & Hard of Hearing Focus Groups

IRS TOLL-FREE TELEPHONE - HUMAN ASSISTANCE

Now we will move on to Toll-Free human assistance.

- 29.** During the last year did you use Toll-Free phone line and communicate with a Customer Service Representative (CSR)?
- 30.** What was the reason or tax problem that caused you to contact IRS? [for probes, use the problem list previously used]
- 31.** Did you encounter any problems with the Toll-Free service with the CSR? Tell me about your experience.

If necessary probe, they may mention things like the following:

- *Waited too long for CSR and had to hang up.*
- *Could not reach the right CSR and get answer/assistance.*
- *Difficult to understand what the CSR said through telecommunication relay service.*
- *The CSR did not understand my question.*
- *The CSR did not know the answer or could not provide assistance.*

- 32.** What was the outcome of your assistance? Were you successful, did you get the service you needed?

Successful Partially Successful Unsuccessful

- 33.** Find out why they rated as they did.

Probes –

What does that outcome mean to you? (i.e., Why did you rate it Partially Successful? What would have made it Successful? What does Successful mean to you?)

Did you get all of your questions answered?

Did you get what you needed?

What could you have done to improve the outcome? What could IRS have done to improve the outcome?

- 34.** What recommendations would you suggest to solve problems or barriers in IRS Toll-Free Assistance with the CSR? What would make the interaction better for hard of hearing people?

They may mention things like:

- *Reduce waiting/holding time to reach the CSR.*
- *CSRs should take deaf and hard of hearing awareness and communication support training (emphasis on explaining in simple words and short sentences while talking to deaf caller through relay operator).*
- *CSRs need more training on tax laws.*

IV. IRS WEBSITE (www.irs.gov)

Attachment 2: Moderator Guides Deaf & Hard of Hearing Focus Groups

- 35.** During the last year did you use the IRS website (www.irs.gov)?
- 36.** What was the reason or tax problem that caused you to visit the IRS website? [for probes, use the problem list previously used]
- 37.** Did you encounter any problems with the IRS Website? If so, tell us about them.

If necessary probe to generate discussion, they may mention things like the following:

- Website information is hard to understand.
- Website navigation is difficult.
- Search engine is difficult.

- 38.** What was the outcome of your assistance? Were you successful, did you get the service you needed?

Successful Partially Successful Unsuccessful

- 39.** Find out why they rated as they did.

Probes –

What does that outcome mean to you? (i.e., Why did you rate it Partially Successful? What would have made it Successful? What does Successful mean to you?)

Did you get all of your questions answered?

Did you get what you needed?

What could you have done to improve the outcome? What could IRS have done to improve the outcome?

- 40.** What recommendations would you suggest to solve problems or barriers in the IRS Website? What would make the interaction better for **hard of hearing** people?

Depending on responses above, they may mention things like the following:

- Make the information on the website easy to understand.
- Make the navigation easy.
- Expand the information base on the website.
- Improve the search engine.

IRS WEBSITE - CHAT MODE

We are now going to move our discussion on to another part of the IRS Website.

- 41.** During the past year did you use the IRS website to communicate with an IRS representative in *chat mode or instant messaging* for your tax questions?
- 42.** What was the reason or tax problem that caused you to communicate with the representative on the website? [for probes, use the problem list previously used]

Attachment 2: Moderator Guides Deaf & Hard of Hearing Focus Groups

43. Did you encounter any problems with the IRS Website Chat/Instant Messaging? If so, tell us about them.

If necessary probe, they may mention things like the following:

- *Difficult to understand what the representative typed on the website.*
- *The representative could not understand my question.*
- *The representative could not find the answer or information I was looking for.*
- *I did not receive a response from the representative on the website.*

44. What was the outcome of your assistance? Were you successful, did you get the service you needed?

Successful Partially Successful Unsuccessful

45. Find out why they rated as they did.

Probes –

What does that outcome mean to you? (i.e., Why did you rate it Partially Successful? What would have made it Successful? What does Successful mean to you?)

Did you get all of your questions answered?

Did you get what you needed?

What could you have done to improve the outcome? What could IRS have done to improve the outcome?

46. What recommendations would you suggest to solve problems or barriers in IRS Website using Chat or Instant Messaging? What would make the interaction better for **hard of hearing people?**

V. PRIORITY IN TYPE OF SERVICE

47. Now that we have talked about all the types of services, tell us what type of service is your top priority or most needed and what could make that type of service most effective for you?

Probes:

Why do you feel that type of service is top priority?

What makes it your top priority?

Which type of service is your second top priority and why?

VI. CLOSURE AND THANK YOU

[Moderator, if there is time, let the group know that you are going to check with the observers to see if they have any additional questions. If they do, ask those questions when you return, then proceed with the closure].

This concludes our discussion for today. We appreciate your participation very much. You will receive your stipend on your way out.

**Attachment 2: Moderator Guides
Deaf & Hard of Hearing Focus Groups**

**Attachment 3: Consent Form for
Deaf & Hard of Hearing Focus Groups**

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Consent Form**

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INFORMED CONSENT

ICF Macro is conducting discussion groups on behalf of the IRS to gain insight into the needs of deaf and hard of hearing taxpayers. The discussion will last no more than 2 hours. The IRS will use the findings from these discussions to improve services provided to deaf and hard of hearing taxpayers.

Before you agree to join in this discussion, please review and consider the conditions listed below:

- Participation in this discussion is completely voluntary.
- Any questions you have about this study will be answered before the discussion begins.
- For deaf participants, a moderator fluent in American Sign Language (ASL) will moderate the discussion and allow everyone the opportunity to communicate; for the hard of hearing participants, a speaking moderator will moderate the discussion and Computer Assisted Real Time (CART) Captioning (Equipment) will be provided as well as assistive listening devices to facilitate participant communication.
- The information you give will be private and your name will not be associated with your answers.
- Your name will not be used in any reports about this group and no quotes will be attributed to you.
- You may choose not to answer questions that you do not want to answer.
- You may choose to leave the discussion at any time for any reason.
- The discussion is being audio- and video-recorded to assist with analysis of data.
- You will receive a monetary stipend to compensate you for your time.
- **Contact information:** If you have any questions or concerns about your participation in this interview or have any questions about the study, please contact the project manager, Bonnie Bates at 301.572.0415.

Your signature below indicates that you understand the conditions stated above and agree to participate in this discussion group.

Print your name: _____ Date _____

Signature _____

[Form will appear on ICF Macro Letterhead]