

**OMB STATEMENT FOR THE
SPEC TAXPAYER NON-MEDIA STUDY 2008-20009
FOR IN-PERSON FOCUS GROUPS
WAGE & INVESTMENT DIVISION
September 30, 2008 through February 12, 2010**

Introduction

The Stakeholder Partnerships, Education and Communication (SPEC) organization is a component of the Customer Assistance, Relationships and Education (CARE) organization in the Wage & Investment (W&I) Division of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). SPEC assists taxpayers in satisfying their tax responsibilities by building and maintaining partnerships with key stakeholders, seeking to create and share value by informing, educating and communicating with our shared customers. SPEC fosters voluntary compliance by making W&I taxpayers aware of their federal tax obligations and assisting them to prepare timely and accurate tax returns. SPEC provides customer service to W&I taxpayers through education, tax return preparation and asset building.

SPEC's Product and Partnership Development (P&PD) office builds and maintains partnerships with national stakeholders, provides guidance on issues that cross stakeholder groups, and develops the products and services required to educate and assist W&I taxpayers. SPEC's Field Operations offices establish and manage local partners and coalitions providing support in the operation of volunteer tax return preparation sites and outreach efforts.

To measure the effectiveness of SPEC services to W&I taxpayer customers and stakeholders, SPEC utilizes the IRS balanced measures approach mandated by the IRS Restructuring and Reform Act of 1998 (this was also a result of Executive Order 12862), which includes customer satisfaction (in addition to business results and employee engagement) as a key determinant of our success.

While SPEC is involved in delivering leveraged return preparation services, for purposes of this project we are only interested in SPEC's outreach activities. SPEC defines outreach as the dissemination of information by IRS personnel or a partner to enhance the taxpayer's knowledge of general income tax law, income tax credit, or electronic filing.

SPEC collects data to report outreach measures for both media and non-media outreach events. Media outreach includes events such as newspaper or magazine articles, television appearances and radio interviews. Non-media outreach is considered to be a communication with W&I taxpayers delivered through any non-media method such as seminars, mailings, stuffers, brochures, direct mail and similar methods. For purposes of the services requested by this document, the term "outreach" refers only to SPEC non-media outreach efforts.

This project represents an effort by SPEC to improve customer service by better understanding the needs of our customers while obtaining the most value for the funds invested. When management is currently faced with decisions to expand or alter outreach efforts, there appears to be insufficient information in the current measure to make an informed judgment based on effectiveness, impact and satisfaction. Most currently available information consists of the number of outreaches and informal, anecdotal feedback. To focus these efforts and make the best allocation of available resources, we must determine the relevance of the current SPEC measure of the number of taxpayers reached during non-media outreach events to achieving our overall goal of measurable, improved customer service. Having an objective assessment of the current measure should assist SPEC to determine its relevance to our goal of improved customer service.

This project has the following primary objectives:

1. Assess the current SPEC non-media outreach measure of number of taxpayers reached to determine its relevance to impact on overall customer behavior and satisfaction through Focus Groups.
2. Recommend any new measure(s) for SPECs non-media outreach impact on taxpayer behavior and taxpayer satisfaction with such outreach
 - (1) If new measures are recommended, then a process to obtain such measures must also be recommended.
 - (2) SPEC Executives will be briefed on any proposed new measure(s) and process to obtain such measure(s) before work can begin on obtaining measures.
3. Perform a baseline survey (or similar data gathering process) to obtain the data and the recommended measure(s) for taxpayer value and satisfaction with SPEC non-media outreach as recommended and determined as a result of this project, and approved by SPEC.

THIS OMB STATEMENT IS ONLY FOR PHASE ONE (THE ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT SPEC OUTREACH MEASURES) OF THIS THREE PHASE STUDY. THE RESULTS OF THIS FIRST PHASE WILL DETERMINE THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE NEXT TWO PHASES.

Focus Groups

The initial phase of this project as stated in Number 1 above evaluates the current SPEC non-media outreach measure. The contractor will assess the current outreach measure captured in STARS and review data from current SPEC partner surveys. The contractor will conduct eight focus groups among the designated groups of taxpayers (low income, LEP, rural, disabled, and elderly). The purpose of the sessions will be to obtain a more in-depth,

qualitative understanding of the current SPEC non-media outreach measure. Respondents will be recruited by telephone and participants will be offered and honorarium of \$75 each for approximately 10 participants in each focus group. The \$75 honorarium is currently the industry standard for in person focus group participants. The screen guide is attached, as is the moderator's discussion guide for the eight in-person discussions. The contractor will incorporate findings in the form of a written report that summarizes the merits and drawbacks of the current measure and provide recommendations for enhancing the current measure or describing new measures.

Disclosure, Security & Confidentiality

Confidentiality will be safeguarded. The data collection process, participants will be identified to IRS personnel by their first names only. In addition, no participant's names will be mentioned in the focus group report. Participants will be advised that observers from the IRS may be behind the one-way mirror and that their comments will be audio and videotapes.

The survey will not contain tax return or taxpayer information. Survey participants will not be identified in any of the documents or files used for this project. We will limit and control the amount of information we collect to those items that are necessary to accomplish the research questions. We will carefully safeguard the security of data utilized as well as the privacy of the survey respondents. We will apply the fair information and record-keeping practices to ensure protection of all survey respondents. 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 releases to authorized recipients.

We will apply fair information and record-keeping practices to ensure protection of all taxpayers. 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 taxpayer information as well as its release to authorized recipients

Estimated Burden

The focus group interviews have been designed to minimize burden on the taxpayer.

Recruiting

Nonparticipants 1 mins x 80 participants x 5 people to reach one participant = 400 mins

Participants 3 mins x 80 participants = 240 mins

Reminders 2 min x 80 participants = 80 mins

Focus group participation

80 participants x 90 mins = 7200 mins

Total burden estimate for 8 focus groups is 7920 mins or 132 hours

Estimated Cost for Phase I of the SPEC Taxpayer Study

The estimated cost for Phase I of the SPEC Taxpayer Non-Media Outreach Study is \$46,135.00.

Other Information

The following information will be provided to Human SOI within 60 days after the close of the survey data collection operations:

- Findings: A brief summary of significant findings that were evidenced in the results.
- Actions taken or lessons learned: A brief summary of any action taken or lessons learned as a result of the findings.
- Taxpayer participation (number of requests for taxpayer participation and number of interviews completed).
- Dates on which the data collection began and ended.
- Cost (excluding regular salaries of IRS employees).

Focus Group Contact

For questions regarding the study methodology, contact:

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