Office of Management and Budget Clearance Package

IRS Stakeholder Liaison Headquarters (SL HQ)

Activity/Event Survey:

2010 National Phone Forums/Webinars

Internal Revenue Service
Small Business/Self Employee (SB/SE)
Communications, Liaison and Disclosure (CLD)
Operating Unit

August 21, 2009

Introduction

Background

The mission of **Communications, Liaison and Disclosure** (CLD) is to develop and deliver integrated strategic communications and educational products to SB/SE employees and taxpayers. CLD also partners with key stakeholders in tax administration including federal, state and local governmental agencies, practitioners, and industry groups, to develop as well as execute strategies designed to enhance voluntary compliance and to ensure that federal tax information is protected by those agencies that receive federal tax data. CLD is also responsible for a wide range of programs and activities in support of both SB/SE and the IRS Strategic Plans, including administration of the IRS Disclosure Program, IRC §6103, the Freedom of Information Act and Privacy Act, and administration of the IRS Disaster Assistance Program.

CLD is comprised of six functions that provide critical support in accomplishment of SB/SE and IRS missions and objectives:

- Governmental Liaison and Disclosure
- Stakeholder Liaison Headquarters
- Stakeholder Liaison Field
- Communications
- Policy and Strategic Planning
- Safeguards

Specific to this package, Stakeholder Liaison Headquarters (SL HQ) – focuses on national engagement of the payroll and practitioner community and stakeholder organizations to provide information about IRS policies, practices and procedures to ensure compliance with the tax laws, both by voluntary means and through enforcement programs. In addition, SL HQ oversees IRS involvement in disaster assistance and emergency relief activities.

Key engagement vehicles/tools for SL HQ and their customers are the use of tax information "Phone Forums/Webinars." **The National Phone Forum/Webinars (NPF/W)** process enables the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to communicate with the tax professional community and professional associations. The program is designed to provide presentations on tax gap and key tax topics across the country. Topics selected have national impact and the forums use presenters who are viewed to be subject mater experts (SMEs) on the topic. Presentations occur throughout the business day enabling stakeholders to participate as their schedule permits.

Aside from providing updated tax information, the NPF/Ws can provide an added educational benefit to participants. For some of the participants, the national forums are being used to gain Continuing Professional Education (CPE) credits, which are needed to maintain their professional certifications. An example would be a participant who is Certified Public Accountant (CPA).

While past attendance may suggest that the NPFs are successful in terms of planning, scheduling and content, SL wants a formal process to measure stakeholder/participant satisfaction. Therefore, in an effort to gauge/baseline the quality and satisfaction of their forums, SL HQ would like to administrate an event/feedback survey at the conclusion of each NPF/W.

Objectives of Data Collection

SL HQ specifically seeks to gain feedback from NPF/W participants on the overall quality and satisfaction of the events. The survey data would be used to enhance future NPF/W events and to develop new strategies if needed. Furthermore, the event survey will be used to identify key compliance issues for future events throughout the year and in FY 2011.

Methodology

Sample Design

This survey will be administered after a voluntary IRS customer event. SL HQ intends to survey the total **population** of NPF/Webinar participants per event.

The forum feedback survey will assist in measuring the quality of the event and satisfaction levels of stakeholders/participants to ensure that positive relationships with customers are being developed and maintained.

NPF/W event information is posted on IRS.gov (for an example of a NPF posting, see Attachment I) and advertisement is made on Tax Talk Today (see Attachment II for an example) as well as individual e-mail distribution from IRS Stakeholder Relationship Managers to their partners in other agencies/organizations and/or associations. Additionally, those Partners post the events on their individual websites. The NPF/Ws are first come first served and SL HQ generally hosts three sessions per month on an assigned day. The Webinars have virtually limitless capacity for the number of attendees and can also be made available at the conclusion of the forum for viewing later by additional participants.

Participants in the NPF/Ws will be notified via e-mail of the survey with their confirmation of enrollment into their specific NPF/W session (See Attachment III).

Subsequent to the forums, the survey and/or a link to a web-based survey will be emailed to each registered participant. The participants for the NPF/W sessions are primarily practitioners, e.g., return preparers, the majority of whom are enrolled agents or sole practitioner CPAs that prepare Federal Income Tax returns as part of their normal tax practice. The participants may also include IRS employees. In the past year (FY09), over 18,380 people participated in eight (December 2008 and January 2009 each had two) NPF sessions. Of those, 6,744 completed surveys in regard to those events.

NPF/W sessions present a unique opportunity for SL HQ to obtain feedback from a diverse group of practitioners who participate in the events.

Data to be Collected

Attachment IV, "Event Evaluation Survey" outlines the type of information that will be collected from participants. Primarily, SL HQ seeks to obtain practitioner feedback on the overall quality and satisfaction with the NPF/W events. Secondly, SL HQ would like suggestions from participants for both improvements and future topics.

How Collected and Used

Participants will first be notified of the survey via e-mail with confirmation of enrollment in their session. At the conclusion of each event, participants will be reminded and asked to complete an e-survey.

The surveys will be reviewed and analyzed by SB/SE Research in Philadelphia. Using descriptive statistics, the findings will be presented to SL HQ in table format. Suggestions and Comments will be reviewed and summarized. Findings will be reviewed and considered by SL HQ for improvements to future NPF/Webinars and for potential topics. The initial baseline data will also be used to measure against the satisfaction and quality of future events in 2010 and beyond.

Dates Collection Begin/End

The FY 2009 National Phone Forums have been held monthly on an alternating basis throughout the United States, between October 8, 2008 and October, 2009. The first Webinar was held on June 17, 2009. NPF/W participants are notified of the feedback survey via e-mail with their confirmation of enrollment in their NPF session. The data collection dates for the FY2010 NPF/Webinars have been tentatively established as follows:

Potential Data Collection Dates

October 21, 2009	Wednesday
November 19, 2009	Wednesday
December 16, 2009	Wednesday
January 20, 2010	Wednesday
February 17, 2010	Wednesday
March 17, 2010	Wednesday
April 21, 2010	Wednesday
May 19, 2010	Wednesday
June 16, 2010	Wednesday
July 21, 2010	Wednesday
August 18, 2010	Wednesday
September 15, 2010	Wednesday

Who is Conducting the Research

SB/SE Stakeholder Headquarters (SL HQ) requests this research. The event survey was developed by the SB/SE Research staff in Philadelphia, PA. The e-survey will be administered and analyzed by the same research site. The results will be provided to SL HQ within 30 days after each event.

Cost of Study

The estimated cost to administer and analyze the survey results is $470.00. This amount is estimated based on the amount of time that may be needed from SL staff.

Stipend

A monetary stipend will not be offered to participants.

Recruitment Efforts

Practitioners who have a confirmed registration and attended the NPF/W event for at least 50 consecutive minutes will be asked to participate in the survey. Based on interest for IRS Tax Forums/ Seminars and Workshops, SL HQ expects that practitioners who need CPE credits and general tax information will be interested in taking the survey. This survey will not be replacing any existing IRS survey that is related to the NPF/W initiative.

Location and Facility

The NPF/W is a nationwide survey. AT&T Executive Services will be used to secure 2,500 conference lines for each NPF event for participants throughout the country. Small Business Televison.com is being used to facilitate the Webinars. Webinars have no limit capacity on the number of potential participants. In order to estimate the potential number of participants, previous NPF registration numbers can be used. Approximately 2,298 register for the NPFs on a monthly basis. However only those who participate for 50 minutes or more will receive a survey.

Expected Response Rate

Given the prior participation in the NPF events for FY2009 through July 20, 2009, SL HQ expects to have a response rate of 37%. This was computed using the total number of surveys returned divided by the total number of forms distributed from October 2008 through May 2009.

With regard to the low response rate, the IRS will assume that all data collected from this survey is **qualitative in nature,** and that no critical decisions will be made by this office solely from the analysis of data from this survey. The results from this survey are simply one piece of a larger set of information needed to assess the needs related to services provided by the IRS.

Methods to Maximize Response Rate

All NPF/W registrants who participated for 50 or more consecutive minutes will be issued a survey notice via email. At the conclusion of the actual forum, participants will be verbally reminded of the survey. Seven days after the initial survey notification, a reminder email will be issued.

Test Structure/Design

The survey has been designed to model an approved OMB “Feedback Survey” developed by TEGE for their specialty events, see Attachment IV. The primary difference between the two surveys is the method of distribution /administration (on-line/e-survey) and the use of drop-down options/menus for the selection of participant answers.

Efforts to not Duplicate Research

"Event Feedback Surveys" are not new to the IRS, and SL HQ has asked Research to administer these feedback surveys on the NPFs for the last three years. Event feedback surveys have not been used in the context of Webinar events. Since NPF/Ws are unique to CLD SL HQ no other NPF/Webinar survey has been or will be issued for these events. The survey may be used in subsequent years with OMB approval.

Participants Criteria

Participants for this survey must have registered with SL HQ and received a registration confirmation for the event (see Attachment III).

Privacy/Disclosure/Anonymity/Security Issues

SBSE Research will ensure compliance with the Taxpayer Bill of Rights II. All participants will be treated fairly and appropriately. The security of the data used in this project and the privacy of taxpayers/participants will be carefully safeguarded at all times. Anonymity will be safeguarded. Respondents to the survey will not be identified to SL HQ. In addition, no taxpayer names or business names will be mentioned in the summary reports.

For the subject project,

- The use of taxpayer data will be restricted to authorized personnel for approved research projects;
- Taxpayer/participant privacy will be safeguarded;
- The data used in a research project will be validated;
- Any known or potential limitations in the data used in a research project will be properly disclosed;
- Any data used in a research project will be obtained, utilized, stored, disseminated, and transported in accordance with the Internal Revenue Manual;
- Related documentation (data dictionary, record layout, sampling plan, data validation documentation, syntax and other computer code) will be made available to any research site requesting data;

- All data used in a research project and under the control of Research, whether stored on computer or archived on magnetic media, will be destroyed in a timely manner in accordance with the Internal Revenue Manual.

This document covers all data used in any research activity from internal or external sources.

The Paperwork Reduction Act Statement & OMB Control Number will be provided on the survey.

Burden Hours

SL HQ plans to conduct either a NPF or Webinar survey on a rotating monthly basis, i.e. one month they will present a NPF, and the following month they will present a Webinar. Given the amount of AT&T conference lines available, there is a potential for 2.500 registered participants in the NPF months for a potential survey population of 15,000 people (2,500 participants per event x 6 events).

Webinars have an unlimited capacity for participants per event. Approximately 2,298 register for the NPFs on a monthly basis, so it is anticipated that the potential Webinar survey population is 13,788 (2,298 participants per event x 6 events). However, only those registrants who participate in a NPF or Webinar for at least 50 minutes will receive a survey.

Note: The above surveyed population could be more or less determining on when the OMB approval is received.

NPF Burden

Given the above potential population of 15,000 participants, the estimated public burden is 750 hours for the NPFs. However, with an accepted response rate of 37% the public burden would be 278 hours.

For persons participating in the survey, the burden time is estimated at 3 minutes.

The following table details the burden calculation for NPF participants.

	Number of Persons	Number of NPFs	Time Estimate (Minutes)	Total Burden (Hours)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	[(1)*(2)*(3)]/60
Potential Survey Population	2,500	6	3	**750**
With an Estimated Response Rate of 37%				**278**

Webinar Burden

It is more difficult to estimate burden hours for the Webinars as the number of participants is unlimited. In addition Webinars can be viewed after the actual event, but those participants will not be receiving any surveys. Given the above potential population of 13,788 participants, the estimated public burden would be 690 hours for the Webinars. With an accepted response rate of 37%, the public burden would be 255 hours.

For persons participating in the survey, the burden time is estimated at 3 minutes.

The following table details the burden calculation for Webinar participants.

	Number of Persons	Number of NPFs	Time Estimate (Minutes)	Total Burden (Hours)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	[(1)*(2)*(3)]/60
Potential Survey Population	2,298	6	3	**689**
With an Estimated Response Rate of 37%				**255**

Total Burden Hours for NPFs and Webinars

Based on an estimated response rate of 37%, the total estimated public burden for both the NPFs and the Webinars is 533 hours.

Participants will not experience travel time for this study.

Study Contact

For questions regarding the Survey, contact:

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