

OMB Clearance Package

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W&I CARE, FIELD ASSISTANCE
FACILITATED SELF-ASSISTANCE (FSA) CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY

I. Introduction

Background: The Taxpayer Assistance Blueprint (TAB) study was implemented as a result of congressional directive to provide insight into questions about service preferences and needs of individual taxpayers and to develop a five year plan for taxpayer service delivery. TAB is a collaborative effort of the IRS, National Taxpayer Advocate and the IRS Oversight Board. A significant finding of TAB research is that most, but not all, taxpayers who seek assistance in a Taxpayer Assistance Center (TAC) are willing to consider using lower cost IRS service channels. The Facilitated Self Assistance Research Project (FSRP) was approved by the TAB Executive Steering Committee on September 29, 2006. Phase 1 of the FSRP was administered during the 2008 tax season. During the 2009 tax season, Phase 2 of the FSRP was conducted in total of 50 sites. Key findings from Phase 2 study include:

- About half of taxpayers screened as eligible for the FSRP chose to try the new service option (49 percent).
- Of survey respondents, most (89 percent) felt their question was answered or their transaction was completed using facilitated self-assistance (FSA).
- Of FSA users who said their issue was resolved, nearly all said that conducting their business using IRS.gov was “Just About Right” to “Very Easy” (94 percent), and they were “Satisfied” to “Very Satisfied” with service received (96 percent).
- Taxpayers using FSA and those using traditional face-to-face TAC service experienced similar wait time for getting forms or publications. For assistance with return preparation, wait time was longer for taxpayers using traditional TAC service for return preparation and shorter for taxpayers who tried the new service option for Free File (on-line return preparation).

Field Assistance has elected to continue to offer FSA to taxpayers in 49 of the 50 Phase 2 sites (1 site discontinued for technical reasons) and seeks to continue data collection regarding their customer’s opinions about the service option.

Objectives of data collection: Results from the data collected will impact future decisions regarding the TAC business model.

II. Methodology

Sample design – N/A

Data collection dates – December 1, 2009 – Sept 30, 2010

Data to be collected –

Taxpayers will be asked to complete an opinion survey following a service session where they use, with IRS assistance available, a computer to seek service through IRS.gov. Data regarding service task, perceived resolution of issue, satisfaction with service, ease of use, future use of IRS website and any general comments taxpayers have will also be collected.

This research is being conducted as part of the IRS agency-wide initiative to monitor and improve taxpayer satisfaction with the service provided. The objectives of this study are:

To identify what Field Assistance staff and managers can do to improve the FSA service option and

To track customer satisfaction with Field Assistance's service options over time.

Cost: No cost associated with this survey.

How data will be used – Data will be used for determining customer satisfaction and future scope of the FSA service option.

How data will be analyzed – Analysis of all data will be supported by researchers within IRS Wage and Investment Research Division.

Data analysis will consist of frequencies, means, and cross tabulations. All analysis will be conducted using either Microsoft Excel 2003 (Microsoft Corporation, Redmond, WA), SAS 9.1 for Windows (SAS Institute Inc., Cary, NC), or SPSS 8.0 for Windows (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL).

Who is conducting research – W&I CARE, Field Assistance

Location – region/city and facilities – 49 TACs that participated in the Phase 2 FSRP study that were selected from the total of 401 TAC locations.

Expected Response Rate – The Exit Survey will appear on the computer screen following service for taxpayers who use FSA. We expect a 50 percent response rate.

Test structure/design – Through standard initial contact with an IRS assistor, taxpayers will be categorized as eligible or ineligible for FSA. Eligible taxpayers will be asked if they wish to use FSA

Following the service event, the participant will be asked to participate in an interactive, computer mediated survey. The results of this survey, the visit tracking software and the initial interview will be combined using the log-in number given during the initial interview. There will be no way of relating the customer access number to individual taxpayers.

III. Participants Criteria

A taxpayer's eligibility for using the new service option/qualifying for the FSA Customer Satisfaction Survey will be determined by two factors. First, taxpayers must possess adequate English language skills and the physical ability to use computer workstations. Sufficient language and equipment use ability will be determined by the Individual Tax Account Specialists (ITASs) or Initial Assistance Representatives (IARs) who conduct the screening for the study.¹ Second, taxpayers will be eligible to participate if they are visiting the TAC for any service they could obtain on IRS.gov

In addition, taxpayers need to have the appropriate documents with them in order to complete their service tasks.

Taxpayers visiting the TAC for service that cannot be performed on IRS.gov will proceed with traditional TAC assistance.

IV. Privacy, Security, Disclosure

Language on the log-in screen of FSA computer workstations explains to users that IRS.gov website and pages visited will be recorded for quality assurance (Appendix A).

Regarding survey data collection, the Privacy Act appears on the survey launch screen (after taxpayers use IRS.gov). See Appendix B.

The customer survey will be accompanied by an electronic version of the paperwork reduction act description and reference number. (See Appendix C)

Field Assistance will ensure that the utmost scrutiny is given to privacy, security, and disclosure when describing the taxpayers that respond to this survey. Every precaution will be taken to assure the proper protection of the taxpayer's survey responses. The survey will be associated with only the amount of taxpayer data that is necessary to accomplish the objective. We will limit and control the amount of information that we collect to those items that are necessary to accomplish the research objective.

We will carefully safeguard the security of data utilized, as well as, the privacy of the taxpayers. Physical security measures include a locked, secure office. In addition, we will store printouts of sensitive data in locked cabinets, and shred them when no longer needed. We will accomplish data security at the C-2 level through the Windows NT operating system. Systems are password protected, users are profiled for authorized use, and individual audit trails will be generated and reviewed. We will apply fair

¹ Per the IRS, Facilitated Self-assistance Research Project (FSRP) Operations Guide (November 14, 2007) some decisions "Do *not* require questions but rely on the good judgment of the Screener."

information and record-keeping practices to ensure protection of all taxpayer information.

We will protect the privacy of the taxpayers that participate in the survey by not using names or any other personal identifiers in reports. We will control official access to the information and will not allow public access to the information. The survey and taxpayer data will be destroyed when we have completed the project and there is no further need for the data.

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.

V. Burden Hours

Considering all 49 sites, we estimate that approximately 70,000 taxpayers will be judged eligible to use FSA workstations in TACs. We expect approximately 50 percent of eligible taxpayers will choose to use the new service option (35,000). Of those, we expect 50 percent to participate in the Exit Survey (17,500). There are 9 questions which will take a maximum of 2 minutes. Therefore, the maximum burden for determining customer satisfaction with the new service option is 583 hours.

Eligible taxpayers who decline to use FSA will proceed to use traditional face-to-face service.

VI. Attachments

1. Appendix A: Login screen anonymity language
2. Appendix B: Privacy Statement
3. Appendix C: Exit Survey – including Paperwork Reduction Act statement & OMB control number