OMB SUPPORTING STATEMENT
FOR THE STUDY TO MEASURE PARTNER SATISFACTION
WITH THE SPEC PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM
SPEC PARTNER LOCAL/NATIONAL OPTION YEAR 2
Wage & Investment Division
TIRNO-05-Z-00012
For CY 2009, January 1, 2009 thru December 31, 2009

A. Introduction

Background/Overview

The Wage and Investment (W&I) Division has identified one of its immediate needs is to help its Stakeholder Partnership, Education, and Communication (SPEC) group understand and improve customer satisfaction among its national and local partners. It was recommended that a partner survey be administered to reach this understanding. This initiative is a part of an IRS-wide effort to establish a system of balanced organizational performance measures as mandated by the IRS Restructuring and Reform Act of 1998. This is also a result of Executive Order 12862, which requires all government agencies to survey their customers and incorporate customer preferences in their process improvement efforts.

There will be two questionnaire instruments used to assess partner satisfaction levels–one for the local partners and one for the national partners.

Objectives of Data Collection

The key goals of this survey are to assess current partners' satisfaction with SPEC products and services, and to understand their needs in supporting SPEC initiatives.

B. Methodology

Sample Design

The sources of the sample are lists maintained by the SPEC organization. They will be provided to Macro and will include addresses and telephone numbers for administration.

This is a one-time set of surveys with the goal of reaching a census of all national partners and local partners in the SPEC program; therefore, sampling error and confidence do not apply.

Data to be Collected

W&I will provide a list of approximately 65 national partners and 2,808 local partners. Macro will attempt to census all partners. We estimate an 85 percent response rate for the national partner survey and a 60 percent response rate for the local partner survey based on our experience with the previous SPEC partner surveys using the same survey method (telephone for national partners and web with telephone follow-up for local partners). This will result in approximately 1,740 completed surveys.

How Data is Collected and Used

The national partner survey questionnaire will be administered via a CATI telephone survey. To achieve the maximum possible response rates the contractor will use the following procedures:

- Pre-notification letter, signed by the SPEC Director on IRS letterhead to all partners
- A scheduling call to arrange a convenient time to conduct the interview
- A call to conduct the interview

Macro will make up to 10 attempts to call partners and will use appropriate refusal conversion procedures mutually agreed by Macro and W&I.

The local partner survey questionnaire will be administered primarily via a web survey followed by a CATI survey of non-respondents. To achieve the maximum possible response rates the contractor will use the following procedures:

- Pre-notification letter, signed by the SPEC Director on IRS letterhead to all partners
- Web survey (notification and two reminders to non-respondents)
- CATI telephone survey follow-up for all web survey non-respondents

The vendor will prepare a report that provides national tabulations and response rates. The report will also include detailed findings, an executive summary, and content analysis of the open-ended comments and recommendations for improvement priorities. Data may be weighted to eliminate the effect of disproportionate responses among relevant customer groups.

Macro will hold the identities of respondents confidential. Macro will not provide the IRS with data or status updates that are linked to individual respondents. Upon completion of data collection and cleaning, Macro will provide de-identified survey data to the IRS. This data will not include any individually identifying information such as name, address, or taxpayer identification number.

Data Collection Period

National Partner Survey: March 2, 2009 - March 27, 2009
Local Partner Survey: March 2, 2009 – April 10, 2009

Who is Conducting the Research and Where

Macro (Calverton, MD) will be responsible for preparing the partner lists and conducting data analysis. Macro's Burlington, VT office will be responsible for administering the web and telephone surveys.

Cost of Study

$211,376 (covering both surveys)

There will be no stipends paid to participants.

Recruitment Efforts
The partner lists will be provided by the IRS. This study will be multi-wave and multi-modal to increase response rate.

Location-Region/City and Facility

- Data extract: SPEC Taxpayer Assistance Reporting System (STARS), Detroit Computing Center
- Sampling and analysis: Macro Headquarters, Calverton, MD
- Web and telephone data collection: Macro, Burlington, VT

Expected Response Rate
Based on historical data from previous survey administrations, Macro can expect approximately an 85% response rate from the national partner survey and a 60% response rate from the local partner survey.

Methods to Maximize Response Rate
Standard procedures will be used in order to obtain the highest response rate possible for both the national and local partner surveys. For the national partner survey, Macro will send a pre-notification letter (on IRS letterheard) to all partners, call partners to arrange a convenient time to conduct the interview, and make up to 10 attempts to reach respondents. The interviewers will be specifically trained on gaining "gatekeeper" cooperation in order to avoid refusals from persons not actually in the study sample - such as administrative staff. Equally, Macro's interviewing team will apply specific techniques to gain selected respondent cooperation to complete the interview.

For the local partner survey Macro will send a pre-notification letter to all partners, send out e-mails (invitation and reminder e-mail) to invite partners to complete the web survey. For non-respondents Macro will attempt to reach these partners by phone and allow them to complete a CATI telephone survey. The same protocols will be followed for the local partner survey that will be used for the national partner survey.

Testing and Survey Structure/Design
National Partner Survey: Prior to survey launch, Macro will internally test that the CATI survey program functions as intended. Following interviewer training and scheduling, Macro will begin with a "slow start" in which we will conduct up to 5 surveys under heavy monitoring by quality assurance specialists, supervisors, and project management. If changes need to be made based on this testing, Macro will discuss the implications with W&I and will decide if the response from the initial 5 surveys should be maintained.

Local Partner Survey: Prior to survey launch, Macro will internally test that the CATI and web survey programs function as intended. For the web survey, Macro and W&I staff will jointly test the survey exactly as it will be viewed by the respondents—on multiple browsers, etc. Upon launch, Macro will monitor the number of completed surveys and the dispositions on a daily (and, at the beginning, hourly) basis. For the CATI follow-up survey, following interviewer training and scheduling, Macro will begin with a “slow start” in which we will conduct up to 5 surveys under heavy monitoring by quality assurance specialists, supervisors, and project management. If changes need to be made based on this testing, Macro will discuss the implications with W&I and will decide if the response from the initial 5 surveys should be maintained.

The W&I SPEC National and Local Partners Surveys are attached. The surveys ask respondents to evaluate various aspects of their experience and to provide an overall evaluation of IRS service. The results will facilitate the development of a comprehensive portfolio of service improvements for tax professionals based on their insight. The results will also provide useful input for program evaluation.

The survey includes questions regarding service and product use and satisfaction, as well as several demographic questions. In addition, ample space will be provided for suggestions for improvement. Satisfaction questions will utilize a 5-point rating scale, with 1 being very dissatisfied and 5 being very satisfied.

Efforts Not to Duplicate Research
This is the only formal mechanism by which national and local partners provide feedback to W&I. This information is not currently obtained through any other source.

Participants Criteria
The sampling frame consists of all W&I national and local partners.

C. Privacy, Disclosure, Confidentiality, Security Issues

All participants will be subject to the provisions of the Taxpayer Bill of Rights II during this study and the vendor will ensure that all participants are treated fairly and appropriately.

The security of the data used in this project and the privacy of taxpayers will be carefully safeguarded at all times. Security requirements are based on the Computer Security Act of 1987 and Office of Management and Budget Circular A-130, Appendices A & B. Physical security measures include a locked, secure office. Notes are stored in locked cabinets or shredded. Data security at the C-2 level is accomplished via the Windows NT operating system. Systems are password protected, users profiled for authorized use, and individual audit trails generated and reviewed periodically.

The IRS will apply and meet fair information and record-keeping practices to ensure privacy protection of all taxpayers. This includes criteria for disclosure—laid out in the Privacy Act of 1974, the Freedom of Information Act, and Section 6103 of the Internal Revenue Code—all of which provide for the protection of taxpayer information as well as its release to authorized recipients.

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.

PRA Statement and OMB Control Number
For the W&I SPEC National and Local Partners Surveys, the OMB Control Number and required information will be provided on the survey itself.

D. Burden Hours
The survey has been designed to minimize burden on the partner. The time that a respondent takes to complete a survey has been carefully considered and only the most important areas are being surveyed. The current selection criteria established in the survey methodology will allow the respondent to participate in only one survey. This will aid in decreasing partner burden.

The national partner survey is expected to take approximately 15 minutes to complete, plus 2 minutes to read the pre-notification letter and 2 minutes to agree to participate in the interview. This is based upon the questionnaire consisting of 28 questions. The local partner questionnaire is expected to take 26 minutes to complete, plus 2 minutes to read the pre-notification letter. This is based upon the questionnaire consisting of approximately 62 questions.

We have made every attempt in designing this survey to maximize response rate. Burden estimates are based on a 60% response rate for local partners and 85% for national partners.

National Partner Survey
Prenotification Letter: 65 x 2 min = 2.17 hrs
Scheduling Call: 65 x 2 min = 2.17 hrs
Survey: 55 x 15 min = 13.75 hrs
Subtotal: 18.09 hrs

Local Partner Survey
Prenotification Letter: 2808 x 2 min = 93.60 hrs
Web Survey*: 1200 x 26 min = 520.00 hrs
Telephone Survey: 485 x 26 min = 210.17 hrs
Subtotal: 823.77 hrs

Total Burden (both surveys) = 841.86 hrs

*Assuming 1,200 completed surveys by web

E. Statistical Contact

For questions regarding the study or questionnaire design or statistical methodology, contact:

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F. Attachments

National Partner Survey
Local Partner Survey
Pre-notes
Reminder Notices