

Supporting Material for OMB Package - LITC Client Survey

1. Background

Justification

The project is part of the IRS multilingual (MLI) strategic objectives to assess the needs of limited English proficient (LEP) taxpayers in meeting their tax filing obligations. Executive Order (E.O.) 13166 requires federal agencies to conduct “assessment of the language needs of the population to be served”. The project will assess the awareness of clients of low income tax clinics (LITC) of the IRS foreign language tax products and services. The project is also intended to assist in assessing the effectiveness of non-English products and services provided by the IRS.

A LITC is a qualifying organization that represents low income taxpayers involved in tax disputes with the IRS and/or provide education on tax rights and responsibilities to LEP taxpayers. Though the LITC receives partial funding from the IRS, the associated clinics and their volunteers are completely independent of the IRS in deciding upon income guidelines and other criteria related to representation of tax clients. The LITCS are operated by nonprofit organizations or academic institutions. Under the LITC grant program, the IRS awards matching grants of up to \$100,000 a year to organizations operating independent tax clinics.

Relation to Previous Assessment Conducted by the MLI Office

In both 2003 and 2005, MLI conducted needs assessment of LEP taxpayers (Phase I and II of the LEP Needs Assessment) as stimulated in the monitoring provisions of the Executive Order referenced above. The Executive Order requires agencies to assess language assistance programs at least every three years. The results of the 2005 Assessment revealed the following about Spanish speaking LEP taxpayers and those who serve them:

- a. There is overall low awareness and usage of the IRS-Espanola website among LEP taxpayers. More than half of the taxpayers were aware of the website. Of those who were aware, more than half used the site and nearly 2 in every 3 rated the site as good or excellent.
- b. LEP taxpayers rely heavily on tax practitioners and other sources to meet their tax responsibilities. Almost 70% utilized a paid professional to prepare their taxes. Less than 5% seek the services of the IRS.
- c. Television and radio are the major communication vehicles cited by LEP taxpayers as their source for information about the IRS and taxes.
- d. Education levels among Spanish speaking LEP are extremely low. More than one in every three has only grade school education. Alternatively, the majority indicated that they read Spanish either well or very well.
- e. External stakeholders would like to see more information on Filing and Tax Credits available in Spanish. This is in addition to the current EITC and ITIN information available in the language.
- f. LEP taxpayers are generally please with the service that they receive in the Field Assistance; Stakeholder, Partnership, Education & Communication (SPEC); Automated Collection System (ACS); and Accounts Management (AM) areas.

Objective of the Current Data Collection

A major goal of this subsequent assessment is to re-evaluate the LEP needs, and to ascertain if there is a need to expand IRS products/service offerings in foreign languages other than Spanish, such as Vietnamese, Chinese, Korean and Russian.

2. Methodology

Data Collection

Data will be collected via surveys administered during the filing season at the LITC, from January 2009 - April 2009

Selection of Participants (LITC Clients)

Fifty (50) paper copies of the survey will be sent out to 145 LITCs to be conducted among their clients, as tax assistance services are offered during the filing season. The survey administration will be conducted among the 145 low income tax clinics, recipients of the 2005 IRS awarded LITC grant, representing 48 states plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

The survey is intended to capture feedback on the tax service needs of LEP taxpayers (communication and vital document needs), the effectiveness of the IRS website (www.irs.gov), and to ascertain if there is a need to expand IRS products/service offerings in foreign languages other than Spanish, such as Vietnamese, Chinese, Korean and Russian.

The 2005 LITC client survey was administered only among Spanish speaking taxpayers, as follows:

- a. Each LITC Clinician was given 30 hard copy surveys to administer to Spanish speaking clients while assisting them.
- b. The MLI Strategy Office provided postage paid envelopes to each LITC site for return of completed and incomplete surveys.
- c. Completed surveys were mailed to the W&I Research Office in Boston, Massachusetts on the 10th of each month.
- d. W&I Research compiled survey results, conducted analysis, and issued final report to MLI Strategy Office.

Expected response rate:

The response rate is expected to be at least 50%, given that in the last survey conducted among Spanish speaking LEP taxpayers, more than 50% responded to the question, inquiring of the foreign country of origin. The survey will be administered by LITC clinicians as they offered tax services during the tax filings season to LEP clients.

Proposed method to deal with non-response:

LITC clients, who seem disinterested in the survey, will be motivated to participate, given the relevance of the survey to inform the IRS of the need to add and improve foreign language tax service/products for LEP clients.

Proposed method of analysis

Descriptive statistical analysis which provide a summary of the data collected, and enable comparisons across the LEP client groups; inferential statistics to try to infer from the sample

data what the targeted LEP population might think about the IRS foreign language products and services;

Proposed usage of the results

- i. The results will help determine, if there is a need for the IRS to allocate resources in providing tax services in additional foreign languages (e.g. Russian, Vietnamese, Chinese, Korean)
- ii. The results will provide tax service management with data on the awareness of LITC clients of the IRS foreign language tax products and services,
- iii. The project will assist in determining the effectiveness of non-English products and services provided by the IRS,

IRS unit conducting the project

Wage and Investment Research and Analysis (WIRA) Unit

3. Acknowledgement of Privacy, Disclosure, and Security

WIRA personnel will ensure the privacy and security of the survey results. Public and official access to the information will be tightly controlled as stimulated by the security requirements of the Computer Security Act of 1987 and Office of Management and Budget Circular A-130.

4. Estimated Burden Hours on Participants

Burden Hours = {(Nr, of Minutes to complete the survey x nr. of persons responding)/60 Minutes}

- a. Expected are 3625 respondents which is 50% response rate from the tax clinics administering the survey. Fifty copies of the survey will be sent out to 145 tax clinics.¹
- b. 604 Burden Hours = {(10 minutes to read the survey document x 3625 respondents)/60}

5. Estimated Cost of Project

- a. There will be no additional cost
- b. There will be no need for external contractors
- c. In-house personnel at the LITC will administer the survey among their clients,
- d. WIRA will perform the survey analysis upon receipt of the completed survey questionnaires from the tax clinics.

6. Attachments

- a. Survey
- b. Instructions & recordation sheet

¹ Expecting 3625 respondents, which is 50% of the 7250 taxpayers or (50 *times* 145 clinics) to be offered the survey. Fifty copies of the survey will be offered to 145 clinics, which are a total of 7250 taxpayers. The LITC are requested to encourage all LEP clients being serviced during the tax season to take the survey, given that the survey results will be used to improve LEP services offered by the IRS