

**OMB SURVEY CLEARANCE PACKAGE
2010 W&I SPEC PARTNERS SURVEY
December 2009**

A. IntroductionBackground/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. MethodologySample Design

The sources of the sample are lists maintained by the SPEC organization. They will be provided to ICF 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 60 national partners and 2,900 local partners. ICF 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 1,791 completed surveys.

How Data is Collected and Used

The national partner survey questionnaire will be administered primarily via a web survey with a CATI telephone survey to non-respondents. To achieve the maximum possible response rates ICF Macro 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)

- A two-step interview process will be followed for those National Partners who do not complete the web survey. This consists of an initial call to schedule the interview and a subsequent call to conduct the interview.

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

The local partner survey questionnaire will be administered via a web survey. To achieve the maximum possible response rates ICF Macro 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)

ICF Macro 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.

ICF Macro will hold the identities of respondents private to the extent permitted by law. ICF Macro will not provide the IRS with data or status updates that are linked to individual respondents. Upon completion of data collection and cleaning, ICF 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 1, 2010 – April 9, 2010

Local Partner Survey: March 1, 2010 – March 29, 2010

Who is Conducting the Research and Where

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

Cost of Study

\$130,049 (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)
- Sampling and analysis: ICF Macro Headquarters, Calverton, MD
- Web and telephone data collection: ICF Macro, Burlington, VT

Expected Response Rate

Based on historical data from previous survey administrations, ICF 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, ICF Macro will send a pre-notification letter (on IRS letterhead) to all partners, send out e-mails (invitation and two reminder e-mails) to invite partners to complete the web survey. For non-respondents ICF Macro will attempt to reach these partners by phone first 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, ICF Macro’s interviewing team will apply specific techniques to gain selected respondent cooperation to complete the interview.

For the local partner survey ICF Macro will send a pre-notification letter to all partners, send out e-mails (invitation and two reminder e-mails) to invite partners to complete the web survey.

Testing and Survey Structure/Design

National Partner Survey: Prior to survey launch, ICF Macro will internally test that the web and CATI survey programs function as intended. For the web survey, ICF 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, ICF 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, ICF 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, ICF 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, ICF Macro will internally test that the web survey program functions as intended. ICF 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, ICF Macro will monitor the number of completed surveys and the dispositions on a daily (and, at the beginning, hourly) basis.

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, Anonymity, 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 (for non-respondents). This is based upon the questionnaire consisting of 20 questions. The local partner questionnaire is expected to take 20 minutes to complete, plus 2 minutes to read the pre-notification letter. This is based upon the questionnaire consisting of approximately 34 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

Pre-notification Letter: 60 x 2 min = 2.00 hrs

Scheduling Call for CATI Respondents Only*: 25 x 2 min = 0.83 hrs

Survey: 51 x 15 min = 12.75 hrs

Subtotal: 15.58 hrs

*Assuming 50% (26 respondents) completed surveys by web.

Local Partner Survey

Pre-notification Letter: 2900 x 2 min = 96.67 hrs

Web Survey: 1740 x 15 min = 435 hrs

Subtotal: 531.67 hrs

Total Burden (both surveys) = 547.25 hrs

E. Statistical Contact

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

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F. Attachments

- National Partner Survey (Telephone)
- National Partner Survey Pre-Notification
- National Partner Survey Initial Invitation E-Mail
- National Partner Survey Reminder E-Mail
- National Partner Survey Final Reminder E-Mail
- Local Partner Survey
- Local Partner Survey Pre-Notification
- Local Partner Survey Initial Invitation E-Mail
- Local Partner Survey Reminder E-Mail

- Local Partner Survey Final Reminder E-Mail