

## **OMB Clearance Package**

### **OMB CLEARANCE PACKAGE W&I CARE, FIELD ASSISTANCE Field Assistance Return Preparation Appointments Scheduling (FA-RPAS) CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY**

#### **I. Introduction**

**Background:** The Field Assistance Return Preparation Appointments Scheduling (FA-RPAS) test has been running since February 1 in five Taxpayer Assistance Centers (TACs). An additional five sites were added on March 1. In the FA-RPAS tests, taxpayers use a link off IRS.gov to self-screen to determine if they meet FA's criteria to have their income tax return(s) prepared in a TAC. If they meet the criteria, they are able to schedule an appointment online up to 14 days in advance.

This online scheduling test was recommended by the Taxpayer Advocacy Panel and TIGTA to reduce the burden on taxpayers who must visit a TAC in order to make an appointment. In addition, many TACs are not able to meet taxpayer demand for return preparation service and there are TACs located nearby that experience lesser demand. The FA-RPAS test allows taxpayers the option of scheduling an appointment in a TAC that has more availability.

Throughout the test, Field Assistance has gathered feedback from managers and employees via conference calls and focus groups. Feedback from taxpayers has been anecdotal.

TAC employees use the system to make return preparation appointments for taxpayers who walk in for service and, in some instances, those who call Section 3709 lines<sup>1</sup>. Employees are able to change, cancel, and manage appointments. Managers are able to designate resources and run reports.

Metrics are obtained from the vendor (TimeTrade Inc.) and from IRS.gov to tabulate taxpayer usage. Key findings from the 2010 filing season include:

- 10,970 appointments were scheduled on TimeTrade for the 10 test sites; of those, 18% were made online by taxpayers.
- Nearly half (5,255) of the 11,111 taxpayers who self-screened for eligibility did not meet FA criteria. This represents a significant decrease in taxpayer burden and allows FA resources to be redirected to providing services to other taxpayers.
- During the final two weeks of filing season, one TAC, 290 Broadway in Manhattan, received 102 appointments that were made by employees in Midtown

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<sup>1</sup> Section 3709 of the IRS Restructuring and Reform Act of 1998 (RRA 98) require IRS to lists local telephone numbers and addresses in one local directory. The purpose of this section is to make it easier for taxpayers to locate taxpayer services

Manhattan and Brooklyn. This represented nearly 39% of 290 Broadway's return preparation schedule.

Field Assistance is seeking full deployment of the FA-RPAS system. It is crucial to determine taxpayer satisfaction prior to deploying any new online scheduling tool nationwide to all 401 TACs.

**Objectives of data collection:** Results from the data collected will impact future decisions regarding needed modifications and continuing usage of FA-RPAS.

## **II. Methodology**

**Sample design** – n/a

**Data collection dates** – August 1 – October 31

**Data to be collected** –

Taxpayers will be asked to complete an eight-question online opinion survey using SurveyWin (subject to change – still awaiting approval). This survey will follow a service session where they use a computer to schedule an online return preparation appointment via a link on IRS.gov. We will collect data regarding prior return preparation assistance in a TAC, future use of FA-RPAS, satisfaction with service, ease of use, recommendation of service to others, demographics and general taxpayer comments.

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 return preparation scheduling process

To track customer satisfaction with FA-RPAS

**How data will be used** – Data will be used for determining customer satisfaction and future scope of the online return preparation appointment scheduling.

**How data will be analyzed** – Analysis of all data will be supported by a Quality Assurance Analyst within IRS Wage and Investment.

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** – 10 TACs that participated in the FA-RPAS test that were selected from the total of 401 TAC locations.

**Expected Response Rate** – The Exit Survey will be offered via a command box after the taxpayer confirms a scheduled appointment or when a taxpayer reaches an ineligibility screen. We expect a 50% response rate.

**Test structure/design** – Following use of the service, all taxpayers will be asked to participate in an interactive, computer-mediated survey. There will be no way of relating the survey answers to individual taxpayers.

### **III. Participant Criteria**

All taxpayers who use the FA-RPAS application will be afforded the opportunity to participate in the voluntary survey.

### **IV. Privacy, Security, Disclosure, Anonymity**

When taxpayers launch from IRS.gov, an ETA disclaimer screen appears and the taxpayer is given the option to leave IRS site or return to previous page. This message also contains IRS privacy related hyperlinks. See Appendix A.

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

The customer survey will be accompanied by an electronic version of the Paperwork Reduction Act 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 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**

Based on usage data, we estimate that approximately 545 taxpayers per month will self-screen and self-schedule using the FA-RPAS system. We expect approximately 50 percent of these taxpayers will choose to participate in the online survey. There are eight questions that will take a maximum of 2 minutes. Therefore, the maximum burden for determining customer satisfaction with the new service option is **nine hours per month, 27 hours total.**

**The contract cost for this survey is \$3,000.00.**

## **VI. Attachments**

1. Appendix A: ETA Disclaimer Screen shot
2. Appendix B: Privacy Statement
3. Appendix C: Online Survey – including Paperwork Reduction Act statement & OMB control number