

**OMB SURVEY CLEARANCE PACKAGE
2011 W&I SPEC PARTNERS SURVEY
November 22, 2010**

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 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 one questionnaire instrument used to assess partner satisfaction levels.

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 names and e-mail addresses for administration.

This is a one-time set of surveys with the goal of reaching a census of all 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 2,900 local partners. ICF Macro will attempt to survey a census all partners. Based on experience of conducting the SPEC local partner survey in previous years, we anticipate approximately 450 partner contact records will be deemed ineligible due to missing/incorrect e-mail addresses. This will result in approximately 2,450 partners eligible for contact.

We estimate a 39% response rate based on our experience with the previous SPEC partner survey, using the same survey method of administering the survey via web. This should produce approximately 956 completed surveys.

How Data is Collected and Used

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 email from the SPEC Director to all partners
- Web survey (email 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

Local Partner Survey: March 1, 2011 – March 31, 2011

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 hosting and administering the web surveys.

Cost of Study

\$95,970

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 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 data collection: ICF Macro, Burlington, VT

Expected Response Rate

Based on historical data from previous survey administrations, ICF Macro can expect approximately a 39% response rate from the local partner survey.

With regard to the low response rate, the IRS will assume that all data collected from this survey is **qualitative in nature**, and that no critical decisions will be made by this office solely from the analysis of data from this survey. The results from this survey are simply one piece of a larger set of information needed to assess the needs related to services provided by the IRS.

Methods to Maximize Response Rate

Standard procedures will be used in order to obtain the highest response rate possible for the local partner survey. ICF Macro will send a pre-notification e-mail to all partners, and send out three waves of e-mail invitations (initial invitation and two reminder e-mails) to partners to complete the web survey.

Testing and Survey Structure/Design

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 2011 W&I SPEC Local Partners Survey is attached. The survey asks respondents to evaluate various aspects of their experience and to provide an overall evaluation of IRS service. The survey includes questions regarding service and product use and satisfaction, as well as several demographic questions. In addition, ample opportunity 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.

The results will facilitate the development of a comprehensive portfolio of service improvements for those who provide SPEC-sponsored tax preparation services or tax education and asset-building services. The results will also provide useful input for program evaluation.

Efforts Not to Duplicate Research

This is the only formal mechanism by which local partners provide feedback to W&I on their experiences with SPEC. This information is not currently obtained through any other source.

Participants Criteria

The sampling frame consists of all W&I 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

The PRA Statement and the OMB Control Number and required information will be provided on the SPEC local partner 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.

We estimate it will take 2 minutes each to read the pre-notification e-mail, the invitation email and the two reminder e-mails. The survey is expected to take approximately 17 minutes to complete. This estimate is based upon the questionnaire consisting of 59 total questions. However, there are several skip patterns in the survey which limit the questions a respondent sees to only those applicable to their situation. Due to the skip patterns, no single respondent would see more than 43 questions.

Local Partner Survey

Pre-notification E-mail: 2900 x 2 min = 96.7 hrs

Initial Invitation E-mail: 2450 x 2 min = 81.7 hrs

1st Reminder E-mail: 2000 x 2 min = 66.7 hrs

Final Reminder E-mail: 1600 x 2 min = 53.3 hrs

Web Survey: 956 x 17 min = 270.9 hrs

Total Burden = 569.3 hrs

E. Statistical Contact

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

Mr. John Hurley
Senior Manager
ICF Macro
11785 Beltsville Drive, Suite 300
Calverton, MD 20705
Telephone: 301-572-0482
E-Mail: jhurley@icfi.com

F. Attachments

- Local Partner Survey
- Local Partner Survey Pre-Notification E-Mail
- Local Partner Survey Initial Invitation E-Mail
- Local Partner Survey Reminder E-Mail
- Local Partner Survey Final Reminder E-Mail