

**SUPPORTING STATEMENT**  
**Approval Request to Conduct Customer Satisfaction Research**

**2012 W&I SPEC PARTNER SURVEY**  
**June 23, 2011**

**A. JUSTIFICATION**

**1. Circumstances Making the Collection of Information Necessary**

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) enlists a balanced measurement system consisting of business results, customer satisfaction, and employee satisfaction. This initiative is part of the Service-wide effort to maintain a system of balanced organizational performance measures mandated by the IRS Restructuring and Reform Act (RRA) of 1998. This is also a result of Executive Order 12862 that requires all government agencies to survey their customers.

The Stakeholder Partnerships, Education, and Communication (SPEC) organization in the Wage & Investment (W&I) Division fosters voluntary compliance by making W&I taxpayers aware of their federal tax responsibilities and assisting them to prepare timely and accurate returns. SPEC builds and maintains partnerships with key stakeholders, seeking to create and share value by informing, educating, and communicating with shared customers. SPEC services W&I taxpayers through education, tax preparation and asset building.

**2. Purpose and Use of the Information Collection**

To measure the impact of these partner relationships and our education and outreach efforts more effectively, SPEC has embraced the IRS balanced measurement system consisting of business results, customer satisfaction, and employee satisfaction. This project is a critical element in obtaining the data needed to measure the satisfaction of our partners.

The project has several goals:

- To obtain two of SPEC's of current Balanced Measures - Overall Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction with SPEC products and services for partners;
- To determine which products and services are vital to SPEC partners overall satisfaction;
- To determine how SPEC can improve these vital products and services;
- To solicit partner suggestions for service improvements;
- To understand our partners' expectations of the service IRS SPEC needs to provide in supporting IRS initiatives;
- To understand any distinctions by partner type (return preparation, outreach, financial education, national, local) and length of relationship; and,
- To understand any differences by SPEC Areas and Territories.

This survey allows SPEC to support the IRS Goal 1 to “Improve service to make voluntary compliance easier” and related IRS Objective 1 to “Incorporate taxpayer perspective to improve all service interactions.”

### **3. Consideration Given to Information Technology Sample Design**

The local partner survey questionnaire will be administered via a web survey. The project is a census of current SPEC Partners.

### **4. 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.

### **5. Reducing the Burden on Small Entities Expected Response Rate**

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.

### **6. Consequences of Not Conducting Collection**

Most SPEC initiatives fall under the IRS goal to “*IMPROVE SERVICE TO MAKE VOLUNTARY COMPLIANCE EASIER.*” If the requirement is not funded, SPEC will not have the two external measures used to assess SPEC’s success in meeting this IRS goal. Specifically for this goal, if the requirement is not funded, education and outreach products designed to meet the related IRS objective to “*Provide taxpayers with targeted, timely guidance and outreach*” will be limited and not targeted to the most appropriate topics as identified by SPEC partners. The related objectives of “*Strengthen partnerships with tax practitioners, tax preparers and other third parties in order to ensure effective tax administration*” and “*Facilitate Participation in the Tax System by all Sectors of the Public*” will also be negatively affected, as volunteer tax return preparation programs servicing the low income, elderly, limited English proficient, rural, EITC eligible populations and others will be less effective. They will be less effective as SPEC will not have data to know which products and services identified by partners need improvement or need to be developed to service these populations.

### **7. Special Circumstances**

There are no special circumstances. The information collected will be voluntary and will not be used for statistical purposes.

### **8. Consultations with Persons outside W&I**

N/A

### **9. Payment of Gift**

N/A

### **10. Confidentiality**

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.

**11. Sensitive Nature**

No questions will be asked that are of al personal or sensitive nature.

**12. Burden of Information Collection**

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.

SPEC Partner Survey

<b>Category of Respondent</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Participation Time</b>	<b>Burden</b>
SPEC Partners Pre-note/Invitation/Reminders	3600	8 min	480.0
SPEC Partners Expected Participants	1200	17 min	340.0
<b>Totals</b>			<b>820.0</b>

**Estimated Response Rate: 33%**

**Total Burden = 820.0 hrs**

**13. Costs to Respondents**

N/A

**14. Costs to Federal Government**

\$136,380.00

**15. Reason for Change**

N/A

**16. Tabulation of Results, Schedule, and Analysis Plans**

Feedback collected provides useful information, but it does not yield data that can be generalized to the overall population. Findings will be used for general service improvement, but are not for publication or other public release.

The sources of the sample are lists maintained by the SPEC organization. They will be provided to the contractor 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 3600 local partners.

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 the contractor 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)

The contractor 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.

The contractor will hold the identities of respondents private to the extent permitted by law. The contractor will not provide the IRS with data or status updates that are linked to individual respondents. Upon completion of data collection and cleaning, The Contractor 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.

**17. Display of OMB Approval Date**

N/A

**18. Exceptions to Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions**

N/A

**19. Dates collection will begin and end**

February 1, 2012 – September 30, 2012

**B. STATISTICAL METHODS**

Data collection methods and procedures will vary; however, the primary purpose of these collections will be for internal management purposes; there are no plans to publish or otherwise release this information.

**1. Universe and Respondent Selection**

The sampling frame consists of a census of all W&I local partners.

**2. Procedures for Collecting Information**

The partner lists will be provided by the IRS. The contractor will be responsible for preparing the partner lists and conducting data analysis. The contractor will be responsible for hosting and administering the web survey. This study will be multi-wave to increase response rate.

**3. Methods to Maximize Response**

Standard procedures will be used in order to obtain the highest response rate possible for the local partner survey. The Contractor 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.

**4. Testing of Procedures**

Prior to survey launch, the Contractor will internally test that the web survey program functions as intended. The Contractor and W&I staff will jointly test the survey exactly as it will be viewed by the respondents—on multiple browsers, etc. Upon launch, the contractor will monitor the number of completed surveys and the dispositions on a daily (and, at the beginning, hourly) basis.

**5. Contacts for Statistical Aspects and Data Collection**

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

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**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