

Supporting Statement
Approval Request to Conduct Customer Satisfaction Research
(OMB #1545-1432)

FY 2012 Taxpayer Advocate Service Customer Satisfaction Survey

A. JUSTIFICATION

1. Circumstances Making the Collection of Information Necessary

Executive Order 12862 requires all government agencies to survey their customers, and incorporate customer preferences in their process improvement efforts.¹

Internal Revenue Bulletin 2005-45 (November 7, 2005)² prescribes that: “The customer satisfaction goals and accomplishments of operating units within the IRS will be determined on the basis of information gathered through various methods. For example, questionnaires, surveys and other types of information gathering mechanisms may be employed to gather data regarding customer satisfaction. Information to measure customer satisfaction for a particular work unit will be gathered from a statistically valid sample of the customers served by that operating unit and will be used to measure, among other things, whether those customers believe that they received courteous, timely, and professional treatment by the IRS personnel with whom they dealt. Customers will be permitted to provide information requested for these purposes under conditions that guarantee them anonymity. For purposes of this section, customers may include individual taxpayers, organizational units, or employees within the IRS and external groups affected by the services performed by the IRS operating unit.”

2. Purpose and Use of the Information Collection

It is through this process that the Taxpayer Advocate Service is able to establish and maintain an awareness of customer expectations, to identify gaps between customer expectations and organizational performance, and to better calibrate its services to meet customer expectations. Data collected will help TAS to identify the underlying causes of customer dissatisfaction in different types of case work and in specific organizational locations, and provide the basis for implementing appropriate organizational changes. TAS provides remedial services to approximately 290,000 taxpayers a year; obtaining customer feedback about the timeliness and quality of TAS’ services from a sample of this group will enable TAS to improve its operations for the whole population.

TAS will collect, analyze, and interpret information gathered to identify strengths and weaknesses of current services and make improvements in service delivery based on feedback. The solicitation of feedback will target areas such as: timeliness, communication, knowledge, fairness and resolution of issues. Responses will be assessed to plan and inform efforts to improve or maintain the quality of service offered to the public.

¹ Reference: <http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/npr/library/direct/orders/2222.html>

² Reference: http://www.irs.gov/irb/2005-45_IRB/ar12.html

3. Consideration Given to Information Technology

Consideration is being given in our requests for quotes from customer satisfaction contractors that they provide proposals for an online survey options. TAS will consider online options if appropriate.

4. Duplication of Information

No similar data are gathered or maintained by TAS or are available from other sources known to TAS.

5. Reducing the Burden on Small Entities

Small business or other small entities may be involved in these efforts but TAS will minimize the burden on them by sampling and communicating with their representatives when appropriate.

6. Consequences of Not Conducting Collection

Without these types of feedback, TAS will not have timely information to adjust its services to meet customer needs.

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 TAS.

Not applicable.

9. Payment or Gift

TAS will not provide payment or other forms of remuneration to respondents of its customer satisfaction survey.

10. Confidentiality

The survey Contractor will explicitly promise all participants that their identities will be held in anonymity by the survey Contractor and that their responses will be provided to TAS without any personally identifying information. In addition, the survey Contractor will not provide the TAS with results of fewer than ten respondents. As part of the security clearance package, all interviewers and project staff who have access to sensitive information sign and return a non-disclosure agreement. Data provided to the Contractor by TAS are used for the purpose of selecting a sample and conducting the survey. Specific identifying characteristics of taxpayers or their powers of attorney are used only for the purpose of establishing contact for the survey and for ensuring Contractor accountability in the event that a taxpayer initiates an inquiry about the conduct of the survey. The Contractor is responsible for limiting access to the data based on a need to know basis. Contractor employees who conduct interviews have access only to enough information needed to initiate contact with prospective subjects of the survey (e.g., name and phone number). Survey respondents are called by a computer's queuing

system. Access to all case-related data are maintained by the Contractor on a secure computer system to which access is restricted to the Contractor's project manager and/or the Contractor's employees (statistician/programmer) who are responsible for selecting the targeted survey population and establishing the queuing system.

All data containing specific identifying characteristics of either the taxpayer or his/her Power of Attorney (POA) responding on behalf of the taxpayer (e.g., name, address, phone number, case number, etc.) are removed by the Contractor after the survey is completed and the data are returned to TAS. The Contractor is responsible for sanitizing the data provided to TAS, i.e., removing all taxpayer-specific identifying characteristics and for ensuring the subsequent validity, accuracy and completeness of the data set that is returned to TAS. The data available to TAS therefore is restricted to: (a) responses to the survey questions; and (b) case characteristics.

11. Sensitive Nature

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

12. Burden of Information Collection

Our method of collection will be by telephone interview to administer one survey. The survey contractor may contact approximately 41,272 individuals to yield approximately 15,271 respondents. TAS has utilized this methodology of collecting feedback from taxpayers since 2001.

The annual burden hours requested of 3,233 hrs are based on the number of collections we expect to conduct over the requested period for this clearance with an expected response rate of 37%.

Estimated Annual Reporting Burden				
Type of Collection	No. of Respondents	Annual Frequency per Response	Hours per Response	Total Hours
Individuals who are called	41,272	--	1 minute or less	688
Individuals who respond when called	15,271	--	10 minutes	2,545
Totals				3,233

Note: The statistics shown are based on FY 2010 which was the last full year of data collection.

13. Costs to Respondents

No costs are anticipated.

14. Costs to Federal Government

The anticipated cost to the Federal Government is approximately \$493,000.00. These costs are comprised of: contractor payments of approximately \$481,000.00 and printing costs of \$12,000.00.

15. Reason for Change

TAS is continuing the same survey methodology as performed since 2001. There are no changes to the survey instrument questions.

16. Tabulation of Results, Schedule, 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.

17. Display of OMB Approval Date

We are requesting no exemption.

18. Exceptions to Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions

These activities comply with the requirements in 5 CFR 1320.9.

19. Dates collection will begin and end

Oct 2011 - Sept 2012

B. STATISTICAL METHODS

1. Universe and Respondent Selection

The sample will be randomly selected by an independent Contractor from case data extracts provided by the Government Task Manager.³ The Contractor, in collaboration with TAS, will design the sample to ensure that each TAS office is provided with a statistically valid report of its customer base on an annual basis.

The Contractor will administer the survey, analyze the data, provide sanitized copies of the data each quarter, and produce reports on the results at both the office and global level. The Contractor will stratify the sample to produce survey estimates with at least a 95% confidence interval with a precision level of 5% at the local office/campus office level. A sampling plan that is currently in use for FY 2011 covering each office is attached to the Request for Approval under the "Survey Clearance for the Collection of Customer Feedback" document.

2. Procedures for Collecting Information

The current TAS customer satisfaction survey is a telephone survey of taxpayers who have had a closed case with TAS which has been utilized since 2001. TAS is continuing this same method of surveying taxpayers into FY 2012. Taxpayers or their representatives are randomly selected by the Contractor from a twice a month extract database of closed cases. These individuals are notified by a pre-notification letter that they will be called by a contractor for the purpose of taking a survey. Customers who agree to participate in the survey respond to an interviewer who asks questions regarding their experience with TAS.

3. Methods to Maximize Response

Given recent experience with TAS's recent telephone surveys, a predictive response rate of approximately 37% is expected using AAPOR RR1 calculations.⁴ This response rate is similar to other response rates for customer surveys at the IRS. The Contractor will analyze non-response in two ways. First, the Contractor will compare the demographics or other information about survey respondents to the sampling frame. This will determine face validity. Second, the Contractor will analyze the results of late responders (e.g., individuals who responded after 4 callbacks), who are often viewed as a proxy for non-respondents, to early respondents.

In regard to the low response rate, the TAS will assume that all data collected from this survey is qualitative in nature, and that no critical decisions will be made by TAS solely from the analysis of data

³ Case data is derived from the Taxpayer Advocate Management Information System, (TAMIS)

⁴ This information is provided from our current survey contractor, ICF Macro.

from this survey. The results from this survey are simply one piece of a larger set of information needed to assess practitioner/taxpayer needs related to services provided by the TAS.

4. Testing of Procedures

This is an ongoing survey with no changes to procedures (TAS has conducted a telephone survey since 2001) or to the survey questions for FY 2012 (a slight change was made to the survey questions in FY 2009). It is not expected that the procedures will require testing.

5. Contacts for Statistical Aspects and Data Collection

The statistical expertise will be available from the contractors and TAS will include the names and contact information of persons consulted in the specific information collection requests submitted under this OMB clearance.