

Supporting Statement
Approval Request to Conduct Cognitive and Psychological Research
(OMB #1545-1349)
Chinese and Spanish Tax Professional Focus Group

A. JUSTIFICATION

1. Circumstances Making the Collection of Information Necessary

The Multilingual and Agency Services (MAS) Branch of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), Wage and Investment division facilitates IRS's administration of policies and strategies supporting the delivery of language assistance to LEP taxpayers. The MAS regularly researches the needs of limited English proficient (LEP) taxpayers as directed by Executive Order 13166 and works with the different operating Business Operating Units within the IRS to identify improvements in products and services for the LEP community.

MAS has used focus groups, surveys, and other methods in the past to identify limited English proficient taxpayer needs, preferences and awareness regarding products and services. These studies have focused primarily on the need of LEP taxpayers. The 2011 research revealed that the majority of LEP taxpayers rely on tax preparers for tax assistance. Little is known about the service needs among tax practitioners who service LEP taxpayers. This study will focus on the IRS tax service needs among tax professionals who service Spanish and Chinese LEP taxpayers. It will result in the adoption of various specific suggestions for improvement to specific products, services and communication strategies aimed at helping this market segment. The feedback received will not institute new policy, yet enable the Service to effectively meet taxpayer needs.

2. Purpose and Use of the Information Collection

The objective of these focus groups is to gather input from Spanish and Chinese LEP tax professionals about the current awareness of tax information, products and services currently available to comply with their tax obligations and their needs for the future. The project has the following five objectives:

- Assess the LEP tax professionals' level of awareness about tax information available from the IRS
- Understand how the IRS can better serve practitioners to ultimately help LEP taxpayers
- Identify communication preferences
- Assess knowledge and usefulness of specific products and services provided by MAS
- Identify current and future needs for language assistance

This information will assist the division in developing clear tax products that assist LEP taxpayers and professionals in voluntarily meeting tax obligations.

3. Consideration Given to Information Technology

Not Applicable

4. Duplication of Information

Direct interaction with taxpayers through focus groups has been a research design used by the IRS for a number of years. Solicitation of feedback from practitioners who serve Spanish and Chinese LEP taxpayers, this type of feedback has not been previously tested in this format and therefore there is no duplication of research.

5. Reducing the Burden on Small Entities

Small entities are not involved in this research study.

6. Consequences of Not Conducting Collection

Without collecting taxpayer feedback about the need of practitioners that service Spanish and Chinese LEP taxpayers, IRS would not have timely information that could be used to identify potential areas where service improvements could be made. Improvement to service should improve voluntary compliance and assist Spanish and Chinese LEP taxpayers in answering their tax questions.

7. Special Circumstances

N/A

8. Consultations with Persons Outside the Agency

N/A

9. Payment or Gift

None

10. Confidentiality

The data returned to IRS will have no identifying information relating specific records to individual taxpayers. Nonetheless, IRS will ensure that privacy to the extent allowed by law and security of the aggregated results will receive the utmost attention. Public and official access to the information will be tightly controlled. The computer files containing this tabulated information will remain password protected at all times. Data security approaching level C-2 will be accomplished using the Windows XP operating system. Audiotapes used to record testing sessions will be destroyed when the project is completed 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.

11. Sensitive Nature

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

12. Burden of Information Collection

The total estimated burden is 68 hours.

Activity	Per Person	Number of People	Total
Recruitment	2 minutes	600	1,200 minutes
Participation	60 minutes	48	2,880 minutes
		TOTAL MINUTES	4,080 minutes
		TOTAL HOURS	68 hours

13. Costs to Respondents

Not Applicable.

14. Costs to Federal Government

The cost for this study is \$17,000.00. These costs are comprised of the following: hiring a vendor to recruit participants, moderate focus groups, analyze data and prepare report. It also includes travel expenses for the vendor and IRS employees to travel to the focus group sites. IRS employees will serve as observers to ensure the focus groups are conducted in accordance to the moderator's guide.

15. Reason for Change

Not applicable.

16. Tabulation of Results, Schedule, Analysis Plans

The vendor will prepare a report will include the recommendations of the focus group participants. The recommendations will be shared with the program owner for follow-up action.

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. Data Collection Dates

Data will be collected within the dates of the three selected Nationwide Tax Forums: Las Vegas 7/31-8/2, Chicago 8/21-8/23, and NYC 8/28-8/30.

B. STATISTICAL METHODS

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 population for this study consists of tax professionals who serve Chinese or Spanish LEP taxpayers. The focus groups will be held in geographically dispersed cities in the country with concentrated Chinese and Spanish LEP taxpayers. A total of six focus groups will be administered in 3 cities at Nationwide Tax Forum venues: New York, Chicago and Las Vegas. The focus groups will be evenly segmented by language type: 3 among Spanish LEP tax professionals, and 3 among Chinese LEP tax professionals. The research will be administered in English, as tax preparers are proficient in English to handle federal tax issues for their clients.

Participants must meet the following criteria:

- Tax professionals who serve Chinese or Spanish LEP taxpayers
- Filed a tax return on behalf of Chinese and Spanish LEP taxpayers in 2011.

2. Procedures for Collecting Information

IRS plans to hire a vendor to conduct 6 focus groups for this project. The vendor will help screen participants and qualify them for the focus groups. A moderator's guide will be used by the vendor to obtain information from participants.

3. Methods to Maximize Response

Information collected under this information collection will not yield generalizable quantitative findings; it can provide useful customer input, but it does not yield data about customer opinions that can be generalized.

4. Testing of Procedures

Pre testing will not be conducted

5. Contacts for Statistical Aspects and Data Collection

The vendor hired by the IRS will perform all statistical analysis for this project.