



**2012 IRS Free File  
Focus Group Screener**

**RESPONDENT INFO**

RESPONDENT ID# \_\_\_\_\_ (1-5)

**Market Order, Group Composition, Focus Group Dates & Times For 8 Groups of NON-USERS AND USERS**

- East Rutherford Group #1.....**Struggling Young Family Free File Non-Users**.....DATE TBD 5:30PM.....1      ...09
- East Rutherford Group #2.....**Young Single Free File Users**.....DATE TBD 7:30PM.....2
- Chicago Group #1.....**Young Single Free File Non-Users** .....DATE TBD 5:30PM.....3
- Chicago Group #2.....**Free File Fillable Forms Users**.....DATE TBD 7:30PM.....4
- Dallas Group #1.....**Young Single Free File Non-Users**.....DATE TBD 5:30PM.....5
- Dallas Group #2.....**Struggling Young Family Free File Users**.....DATE TBD 7:30PM.....6
- Seattle County Group #1.....**Struggling Young Family Free File Non-Users**.....DATE TBD 5:30PM.....7
- Seattle County Group #2.....**Free File Fillable Forms Users**.....DATE TBD 7:30PM.....8

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ ST \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE # (AC-\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

**RECORD DATE, TIME & DISPOSITION FOR EACH ATTEMPT AT SCREENING/RECRUITING THIS PERSON.**

	DATE: _____	TIME: _____	(am) (pm)	Disc	NA	Unavail	Ref	NQ	Comp	
1	DATE: _____	TIME: _____	(am) (pm)	1	2	3	4	5	6	...12
2	DATE: _____	TIME: _____	(am) (pm)	1	2	3	4	5	6	...13
3	DATE: _____	TIME: _____	(am) (pm)	1	2	3	4	5	6	...14
4	DATE: _____	TIME: _____	(am) (pm)	1	2	3	4	5	6	...15
5	DATE: _____	TIME: _____	(am) (pm)	1	2	3	4	5	6	...16
6	DATE: _____	TIME: _____	(am) (pm)	1	2	3	4	5	6	...17
7	DATE: _____	TIME: _____	(am) (pm)	1	2	3	4	5	6	...18
8	DATE: _____	TIME: _____	(am) (pm)	1	2	3	4	5	6	...19
9	DATE: _____	TIME: _____	(am) (pm)	1	2	3	4	5	6	...20
10	DATE: _____	TIME: _____	(am) (pm)	1	2	3	4	5	6	...21

INTERVIEWER \_\_\_\_\_

LISTS PROVIDED BY IRS WILL BE DRAWN TO ASSURE THAT ALL RESPONDENTS QUALIFY FOR THE SPECIFIC SEGMENT THAT WE ARE SCREENING FOR (AS OUTLINED IN THE BOX ABOVE).

WHEN SCREENING FOR THE 8 TAXPAYER GROUPS – AFTER REACHING A POTENTIAL RESPONDENT, INTRODUCE YOURSELF WITH:

**Hello, I am \_\_\_\_\_ of Russell Research, an independent national survey research firm. The Internal Revenue Service has asked us to contact Taxpayers in your area about participation in a research study. Let me assure you this is not a sales call. Will you take a moment to speak with me? (IF RESPONDENT AGREES TO PARTICIPATE CONTINUE WITH...)**

**First, some questions about you and possible participation in this study.**

**1. For the record, are you male or female? (CIRCLE ANSWER BELOW.)**

- Male.....1      ...22
- Female.....2

QUOTA FOR 50% MALE & 50% FEMALE.  
NOTE: THE QUOTA IS LESS STRINGENT FOR FILLABLE FORMS GROUPS

2. Which of the following best describes your age? (CIRCLE ANSWER BELOW.)

- Under 18 (THANK & DO NOT RECRUIT).....1 ...23
- 18-24 (QUALIFY FOR ALL GROUPS).....2
- 25-35 (QUALIFY FOR FILLABLE FORM USER & STRUGGLING YOUNG FAMILIES GROUPS).....3
- 36-45 (QUALIFY FOR FILLABLE FORM USER GROUPS).....4
- 46-55 (QUALIFY FOR FILLABLE FORM USER GROUPS).....5
- 56-64 (QUALIFY FOR FILLABLE FORM USER GROUPS).....6
- 65 Or Over (THANK & DO NOT RECRUIT).....7
- Refused (THANK & DO NOT RECRUIT).....9

3. Did you file a Federal Income Tax Return earlier this year - that is, in early 2012 - for Tax Year 2011? (CIRCLE ANSWER BELOW.)

- Yes (CONTINUE TO Q. 4).....1 ...24
- No (THANK & DO NOT RECRUIT ANYONE CLAIMING NOT TO HAVE FILED IN 2012) .....2

4. Who actually prepared the Federal Income Tax Return that you filed in your name earlier this year - that is, in early 2012 - for Tax Year 2011? (CIRCLE ANSWER BELOW.)

- You/Yourself (CONTINUE SCREENING WITH Q4).....1 ...24
- A relative (THANK & DO NOT RECRUIT).....2
- A friend (THANK & DO NOT RECRUIT).....3
- A paid tax preparer (THANK & DO NOT RECRUIT).....4
- An unpaid tax preparer (THANK & DO NOT RECRUIT).....5
- Someone at an IRS Taxpayer Assistance Center (THANK & DO NOT RECRUIT).....6
- Or by someone else (THANK & DO NOT RECRUIT).....7

ASK Q. 5 OF NON-USERS ONLY

5. I notice that you did not use electronic filing to file your Federal Income Taxes in 2012. How do you feel about preparing and submitting your Federal Income Tax return using a computer and electronic filing? Is this something you would considering doing, or not? (CIRCLE ANSWER BELOW.)

- Yes (CONTINUE TO PARTICIPATION IF OTHERWISE QUALIFIED).....1 ...24
- No (THANK & DO NOT RECRUIT ANYONE AVERSE TO ELECTRONIC PREPARATION AND FILING).....2

**PARTICIPATION OFFER:** We'd like you to join us, along with other Taxpayers, in a group discussion of tax filing and marketing materials which the IRS might use to communicate with Taxpayers. To participate, you would come to our research facilities at (ADDRESS) on (DATE) at (TIME) and spend about an hour and a half with us, discussing these topics. Your participation is voluntary, and as a thank-you for taking the time to help us, we'll have a \$75 check for you at the end of the group discussion. Will you help us?

**CLOSING COMMENTS:** Thank you for agreeing to participate in the study. We are required by law to report to you the OMB (Office Of Management and Budget) Control Number for this public information request. That number is 1545-1432. In addition, if you have any comments on ways to improve this research process, you can write to the IRS. Would you like the address? (IF YES, ADDRESS IS...) IRS Tax Products Coordinating Committee, SE:W:CAR:MP:T:T:SP, 1111 Constitution Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20224

DATE: Summer, 2012

RMR #: TBD

- **Introduction:** This is a free-flowing discussion in which there are no wrong answers. We are looking for your unique point of view.
- **Disclosure:** Our conversation will be audio and video taped, with two-way mirrors and observers.
- **Guidelines:** Looking only for honest thoughts and feelings.
- **Objectives:** You are all natural problem solvers and have analyzed information, weighed choices, and have made decisions that make sense to you. We need you to help us understand those things that surround the decisions you've made.

**I. Warm-up**

1. What is your name?
2. Where do you live & who lives at home with you?
3. What do you do with most of your time? What do you do for a living?

**II. Overall Tax Preparation & Filing Exploratory Discussion**

1. **We're going to discuss tax preparation and filing and how you typically file taxes.**
  - a. When it comes time to prepare and file your Federal income taxes, where do you start? Where is the first place you go/look for information?
  - b. If it's the Internet, what site do you visit first? Any others?
  - c. Who do you trust to give you the best information about preparation and filing of Federal taxes? What agencies, organizations, or companies do you trust?
2. **Would you consider going to the IRS website, [irs.gov](http://irs.gov), to evaluate tax preparation options? And why or why not go there to evaluate options?**
  - a. When it comes to preparing and filing your taxes, do you find the IRS helpful?
  - b. Do you see the IRS as offering (or being) a public service?
  - c. Do you trust any government agencies for information? Which agencies specifically? How does (each) compare to the IRS?
3. **We have talked about a number of organizations you turn to when you are preparing your taxes. In what specific situations would you turn to each of those organizations?**
  - a. And, when is the IRS the best source? When do you trust them?

### III. FOR THE 4 FREE FILE NON - USER GROUPS:

1. **If you could use tax preparation software for free to prepare and file your taxes, would you? What specifically makes you say that?**

- a. Is this appealing? What is the most appealing part of the idea? Least appealing?
- b. Have you ever used something like this? What was it? How did you feel about it?

2. **Have you ever heard of something called Free File - or Free Federal Filing?**

- a. If you haven't heard of that, what do you think it might be?
- b. If you have, what is your impression of what it is?
- c. Is it appealing to you at all? What is most appealing about it? Least appealing?

**There is an IRS program called Free File and here's how they describe it: (READ OR DISTRIBUTE THE FREE FILE DESCRIPTION AND LEAVE IT POSTED IN THE ROOM.)**

3. **What is your reaction to this idea?**

- a. Is this idea appealing to you? What is most appealing? What is least appealing?
- b. Why do you think the IRS would offer such a program? Why would the IRS be offering you a free service?
- c. When you hear the phrase "Free File" what do you think of? Does it include preparation and filing of taxes?

4. **What are your expectations when you hear the phrase "free file" used in relationship to your taxes?**

- a. If the IRS said they were offering you several popular commercial software/ computer options to prepare and file your taxes for free, would you try it? Why do you feel that way?
- b. If you currently prepare taxes using paper forms: would you consider filling out an electronic version of the same form - one that doesn't involve software?
- c. Here are some elements from the description and I would like to get an idea of which are most important to you. Where 1 is the most important and 7 is the least important, how would you rank these elements when it comes to a program like Free File to help you with tax preparation and filing:

- Available 24/7
- Accurate Return
- Security
- Easy Preparation & Filing
- Confirmation IRS Has Received And Accepted Your Return
- Get Your Refund Fast
- Free

#### IV. FOR THE 4 FREE FILE U S E R GROUPS (2 FILLABLE FORMS & 2 TRAD'L FF GROUPS):

1. If you could use tax preparation software for free to prepare and file your taxes, would you? What specifically makes you say that?

- Is a free electronic tax preparation and filing service something you would use?
- Is this appealing? What is the most appealing part of the idea? Least appealing?
- Have you ever used something like this? What was it? How did you feel about it?

2. Have you ever heard of something called Free File - or Free Federal Filing?

- If you haven't heard of that, what do you think it might be?
- If you have heard of it, what is your impression of what it is?
- Is it appealing to you at all? What is most appealing about it? Least appealing?

There is an IRS program called Free File and here's how they describe it: (READ OR DISTRIBUTE THE FREE FILE DESCRIPTION AND LEAVE IT POSTED IN THE ROOM.)

3. What is your reaction to this idea?

- Have you ever heard of this program at IRS? Where did you hear about it?
- Have you ever used this program to prepare and file your Federal income taxes? How was it - what did you think of it? Did it work for you? FOR 2 FILLABLE FORMS GROUPS, PROBE: According to our records, you used the version of Free File that allowed you to complete your tax forms online and file them directly with the IRS without third party tax software. If you were offered only the use of the third party software, would you still use Free File? Why/why not?
- Would you recommend this tax preparation and filing method to a friend or family member? Why or why not?
- Why do you think the IRS offers this? Why would they offer a free service?
- When you hear the phrase "Free File" what do you think of? Does it include preparation and filing of taxes?

4. What are your expectations when you hear the phrase "free file" used in relationship to your taxes?

- Here are some elements from the description and I would like to get an idea of which are most important to you. Where 1 is the most important and 7 is the least important, how would you rank these elements when it comes to a program like Free File to help you with tax preparation and filing:
  - Available 24/7
  - Accurate Return
  - Security
  - Easy Preparation & Filing
  - Confirmation IRS Has Received And Accepted Your Return
  - Get Your Refund Fast
  - Free

## V. New Communications Messages Exploratory

The IRS is considering some new advertising messaging to suggest to Taxpayers that they consider using Free File to prepare and file their Federal Income Tax returns. These are not ads, but just ideas that might be turned into ads – like the ones we discussed. As we go through these ideas, please know that we're not that interested in whether you *like* an idea or not. What we are most interested in understanding is what you see as the main thing they are trying to tell you. What is the one thing they want you to remember from these ad ideas? Let's start with...(ROTATE ORDER OF CONCEPTS)

1. **Initial reaction** - What were your thoughts and feelings as I went through this one?
  - a. What is your first impression of this approach? What gives you that impression?
  - b. What stood out to you most about this approach?
  - c. Anything surprising? Is there any new information here?
2. **Message** - If you could boil it down to a single short statement, what are they trying to tell you?
  - a. How do you feel about that overall idea? Is that relevant to you? Interesting?
  - b. Knowing what you know already about Free File, does this seem to be a good representation of the program? What is missing?
3. **New News** - Does this impact how you think or feel about using Free File?
  - a. Does this add anything to what you already think or feel about Free File? See it in a new light?
  - b. If you heard or saw this idea, would you be interested in finding out more about the program?

(REPEAT ABOVE FOR EACH EXECUTION APPROACH.)

(THEN COMPARE THE APPROACHES...)

4. Which of the messages about Free File is the most relevant to you and how you think about preparing your federal taxes?
  - a. What specifically about that message makes it relevant to you? What stands out to you the most?
  - b. How would you describe this message to someone who has never seen it? What is the most important things for them to know?
  - c. Do you find any of messages problematic in any way? What and how?

(EXISTING MARKETING)

**There have been a number of different marketing messages in the market place. I'd like to know if you have seen them and what you think about them overall. (SHOW OLDER ADS)**

**5. What were your thoughts and feelings about this marketing?**

- a. What does this ad say to you about Free File? What does it tell you about Free File? Who was this ad for? Who created this ad?
- b. Knowing what you know already about Free File, does this seem to be a good representation of the program? How does this compare to what the IRS was referencing in its advertising?
- c. If you heard or saw this idea, would you be interested in finding out more about the program?
- d. How do these older ads compare to the ideas from the IRS we talked about earlier?
- e. Thinking about everything you have seen today, which of these messages about Free File is the most relevant to you and how you think about preparing your federal taxes?
- f. Do you find any of messages problematic in any way? What specifically makes you say that?

**6. We have been talking about this Free File program for some time now. So is there a way of talking about it that you think is important but is missing here?**

**7. Based on what you know about Free File now, what is the biggest reason why you would NOT use Free File for preparing and submitting your Federal Income Tax Return?**

- a. What would have to change or be different for you to consider using Free File?

**VI. CONCLUSION**

**1. Beyond just what we have been talking about here, what would make it easier for you to file your taxes?**

- a. People say all the time, "I'm doing my taxes this weekend" or "I did my taxes last night". What does that phrase, "do your taxes" mean to you? What are all the different activities that are included in that idea? (PROBE: Preparing paperwork, sending in/filing, or both—i.e., the whole process of prep and filing?)

CLOSE & THANK.