

**Supporting Statement
Approval Request to Conduct Focus Group Research
(OMB #1545-1349)**

**2012 Filing, Payment and Compliance Customer Satisfaction Surveys
Automated Collection System Support/Compliance Services Collection Operation**

A. JUSTIFICATION

1. Circumstances Making the Collection of Information Necessary

Executive Order 12862 directs Federal agencies to provide service to the public that matches or exceeds the best service available in the private sector. In order to work continuously to ensure that our programs are effective and meet our customers' needs, we seek to obtain OMB approval.

This collection of information is necessary to enable W&I to garner customer feedback in an efficient, timely manner, in accordance with our commitment to improving service delivery. The information collected from our customers and stakeholders will help ensure that users have an effective, efficient, and satisfying experience with the W&I's customer service programs. This feedback will provide insights into customer or stakeholder perceptions, experiences and expectations, provide an early warning of issues with service, or focus attention on areas where communication, training or changes in operations might improve delivery of products or services. These collections will allow for ongoing, collaborative and actionable communications between the IRS and its customers and stakeholders. It will also allow feedback to contribute directly to the improvement of program management.

2. Purpose and Use of the Information Collection

In 2009, W&I Filing & Payment Compliance formed a task force to assess their survey program. The campuses were being held accountable for survey findings and recommendations that they did not have control over (i.e. notice clarity which is determined at the headquarters level); they were frustrated by the inability to react. Although Filing & Payment Compliance received the survey data, there was disparity between programs on the ability to use this data to tie into customer expectations, operational goals or improvement opportunities. All of these surveys were program specific and updated solely with that program perspective versus Filing Payment Compliance as a whole. This did not allow Filing & Payment Compliance to share data across their programs.

The three programs belonging to Filing and Payment Compliance: Automated Collection System (ACS), Compliance Services Collection Operation (CSCO), ACS Support (ACSS). Filing & Payment Compliance measures external customer satisfaction with its products and services to ensure these programs enhance taxpayer's abilities to understand and meet their obligations under Federal tax laws. Feedback from external

customer satisfaction surveys is critical for assessing the customer's perception of our products and services and for helping the three program areas identify as early as possible, areas/processes that require intervention and improvement.

Using the recommendations from the joint SB/SE and W&I task force and a recent assessment of the entire W&I Customer Satisfaction Survey program, the Filing & Payment Compliance surveys were redesigned in FY2011 to be consistent between programs. This was done to enable Filing & Payment Compliance to concentrate on items that either the campuses have control over or the Headquarters office needs to drive program and process improvement.

3. Consideration Given to Information Technology

Not applicable

4. Duplication of Information

No similar data are gathered or maintained by W&I or are available from other sources known to W&I.

5. Reducing the Burden on Small Entities

Not applicable

6. Consequences of Not Conducting Collection

Without these types of feedback, W&I Filing, Payment & Compliance would not have information to adjust its services to meet individual taxpayer 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 W&I ACS

Not applicable

9. Payment or Gift

W&I plan to provide a stipend of \$40 per participant, an industry-standard amount for participating in this form of research.

10. Confidentiality

No PII will be collected during the focus groups. Moderator will indicate that no names will be used in the final report. Also, the data returned to IRS will have no identifying information relating specific records to individual taxpayers. Nonetheless, IRS will ensure that privacy to 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. Digital audio files used to capture the 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 recruitment phase will take approximately 5 minutes per participant and 2 minutes for those not interested in participating. From prior experience, we estimate contacting 216 individuals to recruit 54 taxpayers (7 per group). The response rate is estimated at 25%. Six focus groups – three for ACSS and 3 for CSCO . Each focus group will be limited to 7 participants and will be scheduled for 60 minutes.

Each of the six focus groups will take place in the form of a one-hour conference call. Participants will dial a toll-free number at a designated date and time. The estimated burden for participants will be one hour x 42 taxpayers (We expect to recruit for 9 but 7 to show per group).

| Type of Respondent | Number of Respondents | Participation Time (minutes) | Burden (Hours) |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|----------------|
| Contacted and refused to participate | 162 | 2 | 5.4 |
| Contacted and agreed to participate | 54 | 5 | 4.5 |
| Participate in focus group | 42 | 60 | 42 |
| TOTAL | | | 51.9 |

13. Costs to Respondents

No costs are anticipated.

14. Costs to Federal Government

The anticipated cost to the Federal Government is approximately \$6,813.62 for the three focus group sessions. These costs are comprised of: focus group recruiting costs, costs to moderate the sessions, create a summary, telephone conference call costs, and participation incentive fees.

15. Reason for Change

Not applicable.

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.

Although the W&I does not intend to publish its findings, W&I will disseminate the findings when appropriate, strictly following "Guidelines for Ensuring the Quality of Information Disseminated to the Public.", and will include specific discussion of the limitation of the qualitative results discussed above.

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

August 1, 2013 – September 30, 2013

B. STATISTICAL METHODS**1. Universe and Respondent Selection**

The activities under this clearance involve samples of self-selected customers selected to cover a broad range of customers or to include specific characteristics related to certain products or services. Results will not be used to make statements representative of the universe of study, to produce statistical descriptions (careful, repeatable measurements), or to generalize the data beyond the scope of the sample.

Taxpayers who participated in one of the 2011 Filing, Payment and Compliance customer satisfaction surveys (ACSS and CSCO) indicated their willingness to participate in future research at the end of the survey and provided their phone number and/or email address to be contacted.

Six focus groups – three for ACSS and 3 for CSCO. Each focus group will be limited to 7 participants and will be scheduled for 60 minutes.

2. Procedures for Collecting Information

W&I expects to use telephone data collection methods, both for recruiting and for conducting the focus groups. The focus groups will be moderated by professional moderators at Pacific Consulting Group (PCG).

3. Methods to Maximize Response

Standard procedures will be used in order to obtain the highest response rate possible for the usability testing. The contractor will recruit usability testing participants and conduct the usability testing research. To encourage participation, the contractor will be offering a \$40 incentive.

4. Testing of Procedures

No pretest is necessary for these focus groups as W&I has evidence from previous research that the research procedures to be used for this task are successful.

5. Contacts for Statistical Aspects and Data Collection

Beruria Novich | Direct: 650-223-8231 | Main: 650-327-8108 | Fax: 650-326-6768
Pacific Consulting Group | 200 S. California Avenue, Suite 200, Palo Alto, CA 94306 |
www.pcgfirm.com

Attachments

- A: Usability Testing Screener's Guide
- B: Usability Testing Moderator's Guide