

SUPPORTING STATEMENT
Approval Request to Conduct Customer Satisfaction Research
W&I E-help Desk Focus Groups

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.

For the Wage and Investment Division, an important service delivery channel is the toll-free E-help Desk phone service. Information collected from the currently in field customer satisfaction survey and the proposed companion focus groups are used to provide meaningful feedback to managers and staff in the E-help Desk function at a national and site level. This survey will assist E-help Desk in assessing its overall customer satisfaction and overall quality for its balanced measures.

2. Purpose and Use of the Information Collection

The E-help Desk IVR phone survey currently conducted by Pacific Consulting Group used to measuring customer satisfaction has not been reviewed for several years. Three focus groups will be used to test potential changes to the survey. This research has two components. The first will utilize a screener to invite taxpayers who have participated in a prior E-help Desk survey to participate in a telephone focus group to provide feedback. The second component will be conducting the E-help Desk telephone focus groups with those taxpayers.

3. Consideration Given to Information Technology Sample Design

E-help Desk Customers interact with the IRS via the phone. Given that already preset communication method, the vendor will conduct the focus groups over the phone. This will allow participants from multiple geographic locations to participate at one time and will limit the burden of travel to the participant.

4. Efforts Not to Duplicate Research

This is the only focus group study currently proposed for this customer group.

5. Reducing the Burden on Small Entities Expected Response Rate

The focus groups have been designed to minimize burden on the respondent (ie. Phone groups vs. on location groups). The time that a respondent takes to participate has been carefully considered and only the most important areas are being covered.

6. Consequences of Not Conducting Collection

E-help Desk would be unable to meet corporate goals and would fall short of meeting the IRS Mission of a Balanced Measurement System. Failure to fund this program would adversely affect our ability to compare our results and determine where customer satisfaction improvements are needed.

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 SOI

N/A

9. Payment of Gift

\$50 per focus group participant

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 focus group recruitment lists will not contain tax return or taxpayer information beyond name and contact number. 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 a personal or sensitive nature.

12. Burden of Information Collection

The survey has been designed to minimize burden on the respondent. The time that a respondent takes to complete a survey has been carefully considered and only the most important areas are being surveyed.

BURDEN HOURS Estimate

Category of Respondent	No. of Respondents	Participation Time	Burden
Screened Potential Participants	200	2 minutes	6.67 hours
Recruited Participants (subset of above)	30	3 minutes	1.5 hours
Focus Group Actual Participants (subset of above)	18	1 hour	18 hours
Totals			26.17 hours

Total Burden = 26.17 hours

Estimated Response Rate: NA

13. Costs to Respondents

N/A

14. Costs to Federal Government

\$10,014.57

15. Reason for Change

N/A

16. Tabulation of Results, Schedule, and Analysis Plans

The vendor will use the results of the focus groups to outline key themes and areas of taxpayer interest, suggestions for improvement and proposed changes to the companion W&I E-help Desk phone IVR survey currently in field. Verbatim quotes from participants will be used to support all findings.

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-May 2012 pending OMB approval

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 W&I E-help Desk taxpayers.

2. Procedures for Collecting Information

E-help Desk customers that have agreed to participate in future research via the companion IVR survey will be contacted to participate in the focus groups.

3. Methods to Maximize Response

Standard procedures will be used in order to obtain the highest response/participation rate possible for the focus groups.

4. Testing of Procedures

N/A

5. Contacts for Statistical Aspects and Data Collection

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

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