

**ATTACHMENT A: Participant Screener for Refund Ecosystem Testing and Interviews**

**Recruiting Goals**

- Forty testing and interview sessions to be conducted in person in two cities.
  - Recruit total of 24 participants (10 participants per group) for each city.
  - Recruit a mix for questions 2-7 from the screener guide.

**Recruiting Criteria (from supplied recruitment pool)**

- Taxpayer **or** spouse earned wages in calendar year 2013 **or** received a pension or annuity in 2013 for services performed as an employee of the U.S. Government or any U.S. state or local government
- At least 18 years of age
- Diverse in terms of age, gender, household income, filing status, education, and tax preparation method
- Varying levels of interaction with the Where’s My Refund (WMR) online tool and the WMR IVR automated phone tool
- Recruit for 90 minute session

**Table 1: Focus Group Specifications**

Location	Date	Time	# of Recruits
Atlanta	TBD	TBD	12
Atlanta	TBD	TBD	12
Washington DC	TBD	TBD	12
Washington DC	TBD	TBD	12

---

Participant Screener for Refund Ecosystem Testing and Interviews

---

**INTRODUCTION**

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am calling on behalf of [insert Contractor name]. We are conducting a paid study to gather feedback and opinions on IRS automated refund tools.

The study will consist of a focus group session on <date> in <city>. The session will last about 90 minutes, and we are offering day sessions. If you are eligible and decide to participate, you will receive a \$60 honorarium. The focus group discussion will be strictly for research, and all of your comments will be held private to the extent covered by law. Would you be interested in participating?

- ( ) Yes – Continue
- ( ) No – Terminate: Thank you for your time. Have a good [day/evening].

[If YES above] I'd now like to ask a few questions to see if you meet the criteria for participating in the focus group.

---

**Screening Questions**

1. In calendar year 2013, did you or your spouse earn wages or receive a pension or annuity for services performed as an employee of the U.S. Government or any U.S. state or local government?

- Yes – Continue
- No – Terminate: Thank you for your time. Have a good [day/evening].

2. To which age group do you belong? **(Note to recruiters: Recruit mix of ages and genders.)**

- under 18- Terminate: Thank you for your time. Have a good [day/evening].
- under 21
- 21-35
- 36-50
- 51-65
- 66+

3. Are there any children in your household who are...? [Check all that apply.] **(Note to recruiters: Recruit a mix.)**

- 18 or younger
- 19-23 and in college
- 19-23 and not in college
- No children present

4. Are you married? **(Note to recruiters: Recruit a mix.)**

- Yes
- No

4. What is the total annual income of your household? (Read list) **(Note to recruiters: Recruit a mix.)**

- Less than \$15,000 .....Continue
- \$15,000 but less than \$25,000.....Continue
- \$25,000 but less than \$50,000.....Continue
- \$50,000 or more.....Continue

5. Gender? **(Note to recruiter: Do not ask. Fill in using Name on record and their voice tone during the call. If not clear, leave blank.)**

- Female
- Male

6. Filing Status? **(Note to recruiter: Recruit a mix.)**

- Single
- Married Filing Joint
- Married Filing Separate
- Head of Household
- Widow/Widower

7. Tax Preparation Method? **(Note to recruiter: Recruit a mix.)**

- Self prepared paper
- Self prepared with off the shelf computer program
- Self prepared with online software
- Paid Preparer

8. Have you ever used the IRS Where's My Refund automated phone or online tools to check your federal tax refund status?

- Yes
- No

***(Note to recruiter: Both "yes" and "no" are acceptable answers to proceed. If answer is "no", please proceed to the invitation if enough "yes" responses have been accepted already.)***

***(IF YES TO 8)***

9. Which tool have you used primarily? Phone or online? Or Both?

- Phone
- Online
- Both

***(Note to recruiter: Please be sure to recruit a mix of phone users, online users, those who used both, and those who used neither.)***

**INVITATION**

Thank you for answering our questions. Based on your responses, you qualify for the testing and interview session. We would like to invite you to take part in this study. The focus group will be held on <date/time> at <location>. You will receive a \$60 honorarium at the end of the session for participating.

7. Are you free at that time and are you willing to participate?

- Yes – Continue
- No – Terminate: Thank you for your time. Have a good [day/evening].

I'm glad that you will be able to join us! At this point I need to collect some contact information from you.

**(Note: This information is required only as a part of this study. Your information is kept strictly private to the extent allowed by law. Your phone number is required only for a reminder call that will be made prior to the start of the research study.)**

- First name:
- Last name:
- Email:
- Daytime phone:
- Evening phone:

- Mailing Address:
- City:
- State:
- Zip Code:

Thank you. We are only inviting a few people, so if for some reason you are unable to participate, it is very important that you notify us as soon as possible so we can find someone else to take your place. Please call or email *[insert contact and phone, email]* if this should happen. We look forward to having you participate on *[insert appropriate date]*.

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 1545-1349. In addition, if you have any comments about the time estimate associated with this study or suggestions on making this process simpler, you may write to the IRS. Would you like the address?

**[If yes]**

Internal Revenue Service, Tax Products Coordinating Committee, SE:W:CAR:MP:T:T:SP, 1111 Constitution Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20224.

Thank you for your time. We will be in touch again the day before the session to confirm your attendance.

**TERMINATE TEXT**

Thank you very much for your time, and thank you for answering our questions. Unfortunately, based on the requirements, we are not able to extend you an invitation. Perhaps we can include you in a future research session. Have a good *[day/evening]*.

The Paperwork Reduction Act requires that the IRS display an OMB control number on all public information requests. The OMB Control Number for this study is 1545-1349. Also, if you have any comments regarding the time estimates associated with this study or suggestions on making this process simpler, please write to the, Internal Revenue Service, Tax Products Coordinating Committee, SE:W:CAR:MP:T:T:SP, 1111 Constitution Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20224.

**ATTACHMENT B: Informed Consent Form**

**CONSENT FORM**

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) is conducting focus groups to gather feedback and opinions on taxpayer experiences with IRS automated refund tools.

You have been invited to participate in a 90 minute testing session and interview with a representative of the IRS and other taxpayers like yourself. The IRS will be using these findings to improve its communications with taxpayers. Before you agree to join in this discussion, please review and consider the conditions listed below:

- Participation in this discussion is completely voluntary.
- Any questions you have will be answered before the discussion begins.
- The discussion will be audio and video taped.
- The information you give will be anonymous and your name will not be associated with your answers.
- Your name will not be used in any reports about this interview and no quotes will be attributed to you.
- You may choose not to answer questions that you do not want to answer.
- You may choose to leave the discussion at any time for any reason.
- Although we believe that participation in this interview poses little or no risk to you, some people may feel a little anxious about the discussion.
- You will receive a \$60 honorarium as appreciation for your participation and time.
- Should you have any questions regarding this study, you may contact *[insert name, title]* at *[IRS/Contractor]*, at *[phone number]*.

Your signature below indicates that you understand the conditions stated above and agree to participate in this testing and interview session. You will be given a copy of this consent to keep for your records.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

The Paperwork Reduction Act requires that the IRS display an OMB control number on all public information requests. The OMB Control Number for this study is 1545-1349. **The time estimated for your participation is 90 minutes.** If you have any comments regarding the time estimates associated with this study or suggestions on making this process simpler, please write to the Internal Revenue Service, Tax Products Coordinating Committee, SE:W:CAR:MP:T:T:SP, 1111 Constitution Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20224.

## Attachment C: Interview Guide

### Refund Ecosystem Testing and Interviews

#### Moderator Introductions

Hello. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm a researcher with the Internal Revenue Service and will be moderating today's discussion. Thank you for coming today to help us learn how we can improve the service and experience provided to taxpayers through its automated refund status tools. We appreciate you taking the time to participate in this discussion.

The purpose of today's session is two-fold. First, we will be asking each of you to follow a scenario and check on your federal tax refund using both the automated online tool and the automated phone tool. Secondly, we will follow that up with an interview discussion session to gain insight into your experiences while using the tools. Lastly, we will be asking you for some comments and suggestions for how we can improve refund status tools for future taxpayer use.

#### Disclosures

1. **OMB Number.** The OMB Control Number for this study is 1545-1349. If you have any comments concerning the time estimates associated with this study or on how to make this process simpler, we have posted an address you can write to. We can also provide this address to you at the completion of our discussion.
2. **Privacy.** Everything that you say here will be kept strictly private to the extent allowed by law. We will use first names only and names will not be used in any report. Again, all of your comments will be held private to the extent allowed by the law, so please feel free to tell me what you think.
3. **Voluntary Participation.** Your participation in this session is entirely voluntary. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer but please keep in mind, there are no wrong answers.
4. **Video and/or Audio Recording.** Because we want to assure we've collected all of your comments and suggestions, this session is being recorded so that we can write an accurate report about the issues that are raised during the discussion.
5. **Observers.** There are a few people in the back of the room who will be observing and taking notes today.
6. **Time.** I will be watching our time and directing our conversation. We will be here for about 90 minutes. A formal break has not been scheduled but if you need to stretch, go to the restroom, or walk around a little, feel free to do so but please come back quickly. Your comments and participation are very important to us.
7. **Thanks.** Thank you for participating in today's session. We appreciate your time and your contributions.

## **Part 1: Scenario Testing**

- Participants will each be provided with the same scenarios. The scenario will ask them to check their refund status based on a set of fictional circumstances. The participants will be asked to check their refund status using first the phone tool, and then the online tool. They will take notes as they proceed through the testing portion. This will happen 4 times. There will be four rounds of scenario testing that will happen within the groups. Each member of the group will have the same scenarios presented to them in the same order.

I'd like you to take about 40 minutes to call the automated phone line and also use the online tool to gather information about the topics you were given. Each topic is followed by a series of questions, so please answer those. We will be discussing your experience with the toll-free line after this exercise so please take down notes as you feel necessary. If it takes multiple attempts for you to obtain the needed information, please keep track of how many times you call/use the online tool.

We would like for you all to complete this exercise without our assistance, if possible.

### **Are there any questions before we begin?**

- Mark start time \_\_\_\_\_. Allow 35 minutes.
- Provide 5 minute warning \_\_\_\_\_. Finish time \_\_\_\_\_.

## **Part 2: Interview/Discussion**

- Using this document, a WIRA member will conduct the interview regarding the experiences and feedback.

**I would like to begin our discussion today by talking about your experiences with each of the topics.**

**The interview will go over all four scenarios using the questions below.**

- Were you all able to gather the information that you needed to solve the issue?
- If you needed more information, what would your next step be?
- Was the topic adequately discussed? If not, what do you suggest we add?
- Were the prompts easy to follow and understand?

### **Generalized Improvement Discussion:**

- What other information would you like to hear/see?
- Are there any specific language/specific general topics the IRS should add?
- Should the information be formatted differently? If yes, how so? (ex: presented in a different order)
- Did you hear any information that is misleading or confusing?
- Is there anything the IRS could say on the line that would make you feel better about your interaction?

**Conclusion**

This concludes today's session. I would like to thank you for coming to share your thoughts and ideas today. You have given us a lot of good information that we will share with the developers of these notices in an effort to improve the taxpayer experience with IRS communications.

Before we go, is there anything else anyone would like to add? Thanks again!

The Paperwork Reduction Act requires that the IRS display an OMB control number on all public information requests. The OMB Control Number for this study is 1545-1349. Also, if you have any comments regarding the time estimates associated with this study or suggestions on making this process simpler, please write to the, Internal Revenue Service, Tax Products Coordinating Committee, SE:W:CAR:MP:T:T:SP, 1111 Constitution Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20224.



**ATTACHMENT D: Scenario 1**

Session Date/Time \_\_\_\_\_

**For the sake of this exercise, please put yourself in the shoes of John Taxpayer.**

John is married to Doreen, and they have three children. John and Doreen filed a joint tax return for 2014. They filed their return 14 days ago, and they are expecting a tax refund. They are hoping to use their refund for an upcoming vacation, so John wants to contact the IRS and check on the status of his refund. Please call 1-800-829-1040 to check John's refund status. After calling the automated phone line, please visit [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov) and check the status of John's refund using the online tool.

- 1. Were you able to gather all the information you needed using the phone tool?**
  
- 2. Did you have to call more than once? If yes, how many times?**
  
- 3. Were you able to gather all the information you needed using the online tool?**
  
- 4. Did you have to use the tool more than once? If yes, how many times?**

**ATTACHMENT E: Scenario 2**

Session Date/Time \_\_\_\_\_

**For the sake of this exercise, please put yourself in the shoes of Shawn Taxpayer.**

Shawn is single. Shawn is a college student and has filed his 2013 tax return, including information about tuition. Shawn is hoping to get his tax refund in time for Spring Break, so he wants to contact the IRS to check on the status of his refund. Shawn filed his return 28 days ago. Please call 1-800-829-1040 to check Shawn's refund status. After calling the automated phone line, please visit [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov) and check the status of Shawn's refund using the online tool.

- 1. Were you able to gather all the information you needed using the phone tool?**
- 2. Did you have to call more than once? If yes, how many times?**
- 3. Were you able to gather all the information you needed using the online tool?**
- 4. Did you have to use the tool more than once? If yes, how many times?**

The Paperwork Reduction Act requires that the IRS display an OMB control number on all public information requests. The OMB Control Number for this study is 1545-1349. Also, if you have any comments regarding the time estimates associated with this study or suggestions on making this process simpler, please write to the, Internal Revenue Service, Tax Products Coordinating Committee, SE:W:CAR:MP:T:T:SP, 1111 Constitution Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20224.

**ATTACHMENT F: Scenario 3**

Session Date/Time \_\_\_\_\_

**For the sake of this exercise, please put yourself in the shoes of Becky Taxpayer.**

Becky is a widow and filed her 2013 tax return 7 days ago. Becky is hoping to use her federal tax refund to pay off some extra bills, so she wants to contact the IRS to check on the status of her refund. Please call 1-800-829-1040 to check Becky's refund status. After calling the automated phone line, please visit [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov) and check the status of Becky's refund using the online tool.

- 1. Were you able to gather all the information you needed using the phone tool?**
- 2. Did you have to call more than once? If yes, how many times?**
- 3. Were you able to gather all the information you needed using the online tool?**
- 4. Did you have to use the tool more than once? If yes, how many times?**

**ATTACHMENT F: Scenario 4**

Session Date/Time \_\_\_\_\_

**For the sake of this exercise, please put yourself in the shoes of Susan Taxpayer.**

Susan is a single mother with two children. The summer is coming, and Susan is hoping to use her tax refund to help pay for summer camp for her children. Susan filed her return 20 days ago and decides to contact the IRS to check on the status of her refund. Please call 1-800-829-1040 to check Susan's refund status. After calling the automated phone line, please visit [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov) and check the status of Susan's refund using the online tool.

- 1. Were you able to gather all the information you needed using the phone tool?**
  
- 2. Did you have to call more than once? If yes, how many times?**
  
- 3. Were you able to gather all the information you needed using the online tool?**
  
- 4. Did you have to use the tool more than once? If yes, how many times?**

The Paperwork Reduction Act requires that the IRS display an OMB control number on all public information requests. The OMB Control Number for this study is 1545-1349. Also, if you have any comments regarding the time estimates associated with this study or suggestions on making this process simpler, please write to the, Internal Revenue Service, Tax Products Coordinating Committee, SE:W:CAR:MP:T:T:SP, 1111 Constitution Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20224.