

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

TITLE: SB/SE 2014 Filing & Payment Compliance (ACS/CSCO) Focus Groups
[Automated Collection System (ACS) / Compliance Services Collection Operation (CSCO)]

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 SB/SE 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 SB/SE'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

Two focus groups will be conducted to concentrate on interactions with the IRS to resolve a tax matter for the Filing & Payment Compliance Program (ACS, CSCO). We would like to know the taxpayers' experience when calling the IRS and with our online services. The information collected will help the IRS provide better service to customers. We want to make sure that we have captured the key factors that drive taxpayer satisfaction with interactions with IRS Filing & Payment Compliance staff.

3. Consideration Given to Information Technology

Not applicable

4. Duplication of Information

No similar data are gathered or maintained by SB/SE or are available from other sources known to SB/SE.

5. Reducing the Burden on Small Entities

Not applicable

6. Consequences of Not Conducting Collection

Without these types of feedback, SB/SE 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 SB/SE ACS/CSCO

Not applicable

9. Payment or Gift

SB/SE plans 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 64 individuals to recruit 16 taxpayers. The response rate is estimated at 25%. Two 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 16 hours (1 hour x 16 taxpayers), expect 8 to show per group. The total estimated burden is 18.9 hours.

Category of Respondent	No. of Respondents	Participation Time	Burden
Recruitment for Focus Groups - Not Interested	48	2 min	1.6 hours
Recruitment for Focus Groups - Participants	16	5 min	1.3 hours
Participation in Focus Group	16	60 min	16 hours
Total Burden			18.9 hours

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 two 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 SB/SE does not intend to publish its findings, SB/SE 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

September 2014 - December 2014

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 the 2014 Filing & Payment Compliance customer satisfaction surveys (ACS, CSCO) will be included in the two focus groups. Each of these taxpayers 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. Focus groups will be scheduled for 60 minutes, and will be limited to 8 participants.

2. Procedures for Collecting Information

SB/SE 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 focus groups. The contractor will recruit focus group participants and conduct the focus group 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 SB/SE 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

Sharon Lockett
SB/SE, Policy Analyst
240-613-6466
sharon.l.lockett@irs.gov

Attachments

- Phone Focus Group Recruiting Guide/Screening and Reminder
- Phone Focus Group Moderator's Guide