

Study 1 Supporting Statement

OMB Information Collection (ICR) Approval Request to Conduct

Cognitive-Psychological Research (OMB# 1545-1349)

Phase III of Automated Telephone Scripting and Routing Research – Testing the IRS Individual Toll-Free Line (800-TAX-1040)

A. JUSTIFICATION

1. Circumstances Making the Collection of Information Necessary

The IRS telephone line (800-TAX-1040) has been in existence since the late 1980s. Despite regular decreases in the IRS budget, there has been a significant increase in the number of telephone calls received by Wage & Investment (W&I) Accounts Management (AM), and with it an increased reliance on automation (i.e., pre-recorded messages, gate handling) to help service taxpayers who are unable to speak directly with a Customer Service Representative (CSR). Over time, changes to this phone system have been made in layers by modifying portions of existing prompts and scripts, adding information and prompts, and making incremental adjustments without modifying the entire system. As the IRS moves to a Future State service vision that utilizes digital service and self-service options to provide the convenient and efficient service for taxpayers, a fresh look at the overall customer experience and associated satisfaction with the current toll-free communications model is desired.

In order to examine the effectiveness of the current AM and Joint Operations Center (JOC) models that compose the IRS' toll-free telephone environment, W&I Research proposes conducting four two-hour focus groups (Study 1) with taxpayers who have previously utilized the toll-free service channel to learn more about their experience and obtain suggestions for improvement. The first effort will consist of focus groups with taxpayers who have previously utilized the toll-free service channel to learn more about their experience and obtain suggestions for improvement (Study 1). The focus groups will allow W&I Research to better understand what contributes to and drives taxpayer satisfaction, and optimize the taxpayer experience with the toll-free line through more intuitive organization, clearer routing, and enhanced scripting,

2. Purpose and Use of the Information Collection-

The proposed research will support current efforts by AM and the JOC to increase efficiencies and reduce taxpayer burden associated with toll-free service. The information gathered from these efforts will combine IRS data with the taxpayer perspectives to create a rich dataset which can be used to inform future changes to the overall design of the IRS' toll free telephone environment and associated communication models.

3. Consideration Given to Information Technology

No online tools will be used for this study; recruited individuals will be participating in an in-person focus group. The Moderators Guide for Study 1 will be developed solely by W&I Research. The contractor will also provide Administer focus groups including audio and/or video recording and distributing participant compensation.

4. Duplication of Information

There is no duplication of research. While direct interaction with taxpayers through focus groups is a research design that has been used by the IRS for a number of years, the research questions in this study have not been previously examined. As the IRS moves to a Future State service vision that utilizes digital service and self-service options to provide the convenient and efficient service for taxpayers, a fresh look at

the overall customer experience and associated satisfaction with the current toll-free communications model is desired.

5. Reducing the Burden on Small Entities

The Testing the IRS Individual Toll-Free Line has been designed to minimize burden. The proposed research will support current efforts by AM and the JOC to increase efficiencies and reduce taxpayer burden associated with toll-free service. "Small entities are not involved in this study"

6. Consequences of Not Conducting Collection

Without this feedback, the IRS will not have information needed to understand the contributions and drivers of taxpayer satisfaction with the toll-free environment .Without conducting this study, WISS and Wage & Investment (W&I) Accounts Management (AM) cannot understand what contributes to and drives taxpayer satisfaction, and optimize the taxpayer experience with the toll-free line through more intuitive organization, clearer routing, and enhanced scripting, W&I Research proposes conducting two separate, but related, studies to examine the effectiveness of the current AM and Joint Operations Center (JOC) models that compose the IRS' toll-free telephone environment. The information collected is needed to determine any improvements that may be beneficial to the design of future tailored service approaches with a focus on digital customer service.

7. Special Circumstances

There are no special circumstances relating to this request. The information collected will be voluntary and will not be used for statistical purposes.

8. Consultations with Persons Outside the Agency

There are no known consultations with persons outside of the Agency.

9. Payment or Gift:

The maximum incentive received for Focus Groups will be \$75 (for up to 2 hours) provided for participation.

10. Confidentiality:

All participants will be subject to Section 3, Paragraph F (entitled "Security -- HSPD-12") is incorporated in its entirety to the extent allowed by law The Contractor specifically acknowledges that the requirements of the Federal Information Security Management Act (FISMA) Title III of the E-Government Act of 2002, P.L. 107-347, are applicable to this task order. The FISMA security reviews for this contract have been determined to be of a moderate sensitivity impact level in the areas of confidentiality, integrity, and availability. WISS will ensure that all participants are treated fairly and appropriately. The security of the data used in this project and the privacy to the extent allowed by law of the taxpayers will be carefully safeguarded at all times. 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 estimated time to complete the participant screening is five minutes. The estimated time for each reminder call is one minute, with each testing session lasting 120 minutes. We estimate that 10% of the taxpayers

contacted for the study will qualify and be willing to participate. Using this percentage, a total of 560 individuals will need to be screened to recruit the needed 10 participants for each focus group. We estimate that 16 people will be sent home because we will only need 40 to stay for the focus groups.

To achieve these objectives, W&I Research plans to conduct a total of 4 focus groups in four separate, yet to be determined, cities.

Estimated Study Burden				
Type of Collection	No. of Respondents	Frequency Per Response	Minutes Per Response	Total Hours
Participant Screening	560	1	5	46.7
Recruited Participant Reminder Calls	56	1	1	.9
Completing Informed Consent	56	1	1	.9
Study Participation	40	1	120	80
Total Study Burden				128.5

13. Costs to Respondents

There is no cost to respondents resulting from the collection of information.

14. Cost of Federal Government

\$ 75,058.50

15. Reason for Change

No change is being requested. This is a new request

16. Tabulation of Results, Schedule, Analysis Plans

W&I Research will evaluate the clarity, detail and innovativeness of the interview and focus group data analysis and reporting. This includes the Contractor’s plan for scoring and analyzing the data as well as ensuring accuracy of data entry and analysis. This also includes the Contractor’s plan for quality assurance. The Contractor shall deliver all copies of completed deliverables to the W&I Survey Administration and Analysis, in Atlanta, GA.

17. Display of OMB Approval Date

IRS is seeking approval to not display the expiration date for OMB approval, as this is a one-time, limited-duration collection

18. Exceptions to Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions

These activities comply with the requirements in 5 CFR 1320.9.

19. Dates Collection of Information will Begin and End

Data collection will begin on June 19, 2017 and by June 18, 2018.

B. STATISTICAL METHODS 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

To participate in this study, participants must be at least 18 years of age, have previous experience with the 1040 Line, and be diverse in terms of age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, filing status, and tax preparation method.

Each focus group will have 10 participants. Research has demonstrated that this number of participants helps create the best group dynamics: the groups are sufficiently large to stimulate spontaneous interaction, but small enough to give everyone sufficient opportunity to speak.

The Contractor will use a screener to qualify and select focus group participants. The qualitative data gathered will not be, nor presented to be, representative of the population.

2. Procedures for Collecting Information

The focus groups will be moderated by trained moderators from W&I Research, using a moderator's guide developed by W&I Research. Focus groups will be no longer than two hours in duration, and prior to the start of the focus group, participants will be asked by the Contractor to read and sign a consent form.

The moderator will lead the discussion and monitor the time. Discussion will center on previous experiences with the 1040 Line, general experience with the toll-free service channel, exploration of the thought process while using the 1040 Line, and suggestions for improvement. At the close of the focus groups, the moderator will ask for final thoughts and the Contractor will dispense the stipend to participants.

3. Methods to Maximize Response

Information collected will not yield generalizable quantitative findings; it can provide useful customer input, but it does not yield data about taxpayer opinions that can be generalized. Contractor will supply rationale and justification (including prior results/experiences). At minimum, follow-up phone calls with participants recruited will be made by the Contractor to ensure that 10 to 12 show-up for the focus groups. At a minimum, follow-up phone calls with participants recruited will be made by the Contractor to ensure the desired numbers of testing sessions are conducted. The Contractor will conduct the sessions and deliver the honorarium to participants

4. Testing of Procedures

The moderators guide will be pre-tested internally with staff from W&I Research.

5. Contacts for Statistical Aspects and Data Collection

For questions regarding the study and statistical methodology, contact:

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