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## United States Mint Focus Groups Research Discussion Guide

### I. INTRODUCTION

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- Ground Rules: Audio-taping, anonymity, candor, cell phones, pagers, etc.
- Background & Objectives: The purpose of today's discussion is to talk about some core product enhancements and possible new products the U.S. Mint is considering.
- Introductions: First name
- **Customers:** Types of coins that are especially liked, length of time collecting and/or buying U.S. coins. Probe if for self or as a gift
- **Non-Customers:** Items collected and length of time collecting. Ever purchased U.S. coins?

*Demonstrate core products for Non-Customers*

### II. CURRENT COIN COLLECTING/BUYING PRACTICES

***(Non-Customers) What particular types of coins have special interest or appeal to you and what makes these coins so attractive to you? Probe...***

- Beauty or artistry?
- The history associated with them?
- Other factors, if any, that play a role in your attitudes and behaviors?
- ***(Non-Customers) What coin purchases, if any, have you made? For example, have you bought any U.S. coins from dealers, Internet auctions, (etc.)?***
  - ***If some:*** Why have you not purchased any coins from the U.S. Mint?
    - ☐☐ To what extent is lack of awareness a factor?
    - ☐☐ What about limited knowledge/dissatisfaction with current products?
    - ☐☐ How about the perceived value/prices of the products?
    - ☐☐ What do these other sources provide that the U.S. Mint does not?
  - ***If none:*** Why have you never purchased any coins from any sources?

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- To what extent is lack of awareness a factor?
  - What about limited knowledge/dissatisfaction with current products?
  - How about the perceived value/prices of the products?
- ***(Non-Customers) Have you ever considered purchasing coins to give as gifts? Probe...***
    - **If so:** For whom? What occasions?
    - **If not:** Why not?
    - What circumstances would prompt you to make such a purchase?
    - What types of items, if any, would propel you to make a purchase?
  - ***(Customers) What types of coins and coin-related products have you bought from the U.S. Mint? Probe if for self or as a gift***
  - ***(Customers) Thinking specifically about the coins that you buy from the U.S. Mint, what specific products and how much of each do you typically purchase directly from the U.S. Mint in a year? Probe...***
    - Annual coin sets (e.g., quarters, uncirculated, proofs, silver proofs, etc.)
    - America the Beautiful products
    - Commemorative coins
    - Bags/rolls
    - American Eagle coins
    - Gold Buffalo
    - Presidential \$1 coins
    - Medals
    - Other items (e.g., specialty products)
  - ***(Customers) What types of coins do you expect to purchase from the U.S. Mint in the next year? Probe...***
    - Annual coin sets (e.g., quarters, uncirculated, proofs, silver proofs, etc.)
    - America the Beautiful products
    - Commemorative coins
    - Bags/rolls
    - American Eagle coins
    - Gold Buffalo
    - Presidential \$1 coins
    - Medals
    - Other items (e.g., specialty products)

### III. ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT PRODUCTS/PACKAGING

- ***(Customers/Non-customers) Overall, what are your impressions of the coin products that the U.S. Mint produces? Probe...***

- Things you like? Dislike?
- How do you feel about them for self? For gifts?
- ***(Customers/Non-customers) How do you feel about the packaging of the products in general?*** (Note: some customers will say no packaging at all so need to acknowledge and move on.)
  - How do you feel about the packaging for items you do/might purchase for self? For gifts?
- ***(Customers/Non-customers) Ask each participant which item they rated highest, and which lowest, and why?***
  - Probe...what specifically do you like/dislike?
- ***(Customers/Non-customers) As a group, ask why certain items were collectively rated low.***
  - Probe...what specifically do you dislike?
- ***(Customers/Non-customers) How does the current packaging (especially ones that are disliked) affect their likelihood to purchase...***
  - For self?
  - For gift?
  - Why?

#### IV. Uncirculated Sets

**Explain to participants:** Each year, the U.S. Mint produces a set of 28 uncirculated coins. The set costs \$27.95 and includes the 5 America the Beautiful quarters for that year, the 4 Presidential \$1 coins for the year, the Native American \$1 coin, the Kennedy half-dollar, the Roosevelt dime, the Jefferson nickel, and the Lincoln penny. The set comes in two coin sleeves—one each for coins produced at the United States Mint facilities at Denver and Philadelphia.

*Allow participants to view the opened 2014 Uncirculated sets*

- Have you ever purchased an Uncirculated Coin set? / How likely are you to purchase an Uncirculated Coin set in the future?
- What do you like about the current set? Dislike?
  - o **Probe:** display design, colors, images, material
- Are there any elements that could be changed to make it more appealing to you?
  - o **Probe:** packaging quality, artwork

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- If the U.S. Mint were to change the theme of the Uncirculated Coin set, what might you like to see?

*Hand out Uncirculated Sets rating sheet (orange color)*

**Explain to participants:** Here are some examples of possible new themes for the Uncirculated Sets. The designs would include two sets of coins held in a sleeve, one Philadelphia set and one Denver set. The examples are slightly smaller than the current set, but may be the same size as the current set if produced. The price, including the sleeve, is expected to remain at \$27.95.

*Allow participants to view sample themes (3 patriotic and 2 other)*

- What do you like about these possible themes? Dislike?
  - Probe: design, artwork
- Which theme do you think is most appropriate for the Uncirculated set?

**Explain to participants:** Currently, consumers receive the Uncirculated sets in brown cardboard cartons. The cartons containing the sets are then shipped in a box for delivery.

*Allow participants to view the cartons*

- What do you think of this packaging?
- Is it better or worse for the cartons to be replaced with the sleeves discussed earlier?
  - **Probe:** concerns for durability during shipment [Moderator's Note: will be placed in shipping box with dunnage.]

*Hand out Future Uncirculated Sets rating sheet (white color)*

## **V. Mark Twain Commemorative**

**Explain to participants:** Each year, Congress authorizes the U.S. Mint to produce two commemorative coin programs honoring particular American individuals, events, or institutions. For 2016, Mark Twain has been selected as one of the two honorees for the commemorative coin program. **[Moderator's Note:** other honoree is the National Park Service Centennial] The coins celebrating his life will be produced in silver and gold proof and uncirculated finishes, with a portion of the proceeds for each sale donated to Mark Twain-related non-profits.

- How familiar are you with Mark Twain?
- What is important to you about this individual?
- Would you be interested in a gold coin (approx. \$430 and ~1/4 oz.) honoring Mark Twain? A Silver coin (approx. \$45 and ~1 oz.)?
  - **Probe:** two-coin bundled set (not a special set) approx. \$475

*Hand out Commemorative Coins rating sheet (yellow color)  
Hand out Content Focus and allow time for highlighting/cross-out exercise (gray color)*

**Explain to participants:** For some commemorative coins, the U.S. Mint produces a special set that can include historical information, a unique display, and additional content. The envisioned set would include a silver proof coin and sell for approximately \$60-\$70.

*Allow participants to view previous commemorative special sets and congratulations set*

- **[If time allows:]** If the U.S. Mint were to produce such a set with the Mark Twain Proof Silver \$1 commemorative coin, what would you like it to focus on?
- What images or other components would you like to see?
  - o **Probe:** stamps, quotes, prints, images, etc.
  - o **[Moderator's Note:** Replicas, additional coins, or other customized special items are not being encouraged for this set.]
  - o **[Moderator's Note:** The majority of Twain's texts (before 1923, including Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer) are in the public domain. Images, reprint editions with edits or criticism, and posthumously published works may still fall under copyright.]
- Among these previous commemorative special sets, which packaging is most appealing to you?
  - o **Probe:** size, shape, presentation/display, coin holder, graphic/image placement
- Do you prefer an informational booklet or information printed on the packaging? Both?
  - o **Probe:** if desired, should booklet and/or packaging include photos only, a mix of photos and information, or information only?

*Hand out Commemorative set rating sheet (blue color)*

## **VI. United States Mint Arts Medals Program**

**Explain to participants:** The U.S. Mint is exploring a new category of annual medals featuring freestyle art with an American theme. Unlike previous medals honoring specific individuals or events, U.S. Mint artists would express the values, aspirations, and shared heritage of the nation as the artist is inspired for the medals designs. Two medals are expected to be released each year in this program. One medal will be focused on contemporary expressions of "Liberty," while the other will be an American theme of the artists' choosing. The medals may be released in silver (approx. \$50 and .999 silver) or Bronze (approx. \$6.95) and will likely come in a 1 - 5/16" size.

*Allow participants to view New Frontier Bronze medal (NASA missions), Norman Borlaug medal (Nobel Peace Prize winning biologist who developed high-yield, disease-resistant wheat, credited with saving over 1B people from starvation),*

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*Tuskegee Airmen medal (African American WWII military pilots), and Theodore Roosevelt Coin & Chronicles set (Silver and Bronze medals included). Allow participants to view placards for images likely to appear on reverse.*

- Have you ever purchased medals from the United States Mint? / How likely are you to purchase medals like these?
- Would you prefer the medals in silver (approx. \$50, .999) or bronze (approx. \$6.95)?
- Are you familiar with any of the sculptors/engravers who design U.S. Mint coins and medals? Would more information about the sculptors/engravers interest you or make the program more valuable?
- If the U.S. Mint were to offer a subscription program, would you consider signing up? The medals would be automatically charged to your credit card and shipped to you upon their release.
  - o **Probe:** duration of program, released one every 6 months or both annually

*Hand out Arts Medals Program rating sheet (tan color)*

- Would you be interested in the medals with special finishes?

*Allow participants to view antique finish (Franklin D. Roosevelt set), reverse proof (Kennedy), and enhanced uncirculated finish with laser frosting (Kennedy).*

- In what size should the medals be produced? 1½"? 1 - 5/16"? 3"?  
*Allow participants to view 1½" (NASA New Frontiers, Tuskegee Airmen), 1 - 5/16" (JFK), and 3" (Code Talkers)*

**Explain to participants:** For purchasers who enroll in the medals program, the U.S. Mint is considering special packaging.

*Allow participants to view standard plastic wrapping ("lollipop wrap") and sample clamshell box*

- Would you be interested in this type of clamshell packaging? What do you like about it?
  - o **Probe:** only for enrollees, space concerns, option for non-subscription (additional cost)

*Hand out Arts Medals Program Special Finishes and Packaging rating sheet (pink color)*

## **VII. WRAP UP**

- Thank participants. Ask for any other comments.