

UNITED STATES MINT  
QUALITATIVE CONSUMER RESEARCH – FY 15/16 CSM FOCUS GROUPS  
4/28/2015

**Introduction /Purpose of the Research**

This request is for OMB clearance for the United States Mint's ongoing core focus groups, which are designed to develop an in-depth understanding of various topics that will be use to inform decisions on a range of product and service related issues. This research was conducted in Fiscal Year 2014 and Fiscal Year 2015 under OMB control number 1525-0012-0186.

The purpose of the research is to collect information from United States Mint customers and non-customers on a regular basis, to evaluate current United States Mint products, services, and marketing activities; as well as to obtain feedback and reactions before changing or introducing new products, services, or marketing activities. The information gathered from these focus-group sessions will provide guidance and direction for improving customer satisfaction with products and services in Fiscal Year 2015 and Fiscal Year 2016 help us better understand and serve the needs of non-customers expressing an interest in our products, and help ensure we carry out our mandate effectively and efficiently.

Part of the United States Mint's mission is to produce and sell collectible coin products to the American public. Executive Order No. 12862 (September 1993), titled "Setting Customer Service Standards," establishes a mandate for the government to ensure the kind and quality of services offered are aligned with those the public wants (Section 1b). To effectively accomplish these goals, the United States Mint utilizes a combination of accepted research methods that shed light on the awareness, satisfaction and preferences among the public as they relate to collectible coin products and services. Conducting focus groups in order to receive customer feedback is one element of this research project.

The consequence of not performing this collection is the United States Mint's diminished ability to maintain service levels that satisfy customers.

**Qualitative Research Topic Outline**

The topics planned for discussion are:

1. Consumer preferences for current United States Mint products, services, and channels (e.g., quality, value, order fulfillment, communications, etc.)
2. Consumer preferences concerning new product development, product line extensions, proposed product/pricing changes, and
3. Assessment and evaluation of new product and packaging concepts (provided by United States Mint) as well as new product ideas

## **Sample Design and Methodology**

A total of 48 focus groups will be conducted in 12 cities (4 focus groups per location), with approximately 10 participants per group – which will include a combination of customers and non-customers. Screeners will be utilized to help recruit and select respondents for focus groups or depth interviews. Lists of potential participants in customer groups are obtained from our customer database. Customer groups are typically segmented based on annual spending on United States Mint products (e.g., high and low spend) and/or tenure levels depending on the research objectives. Customers fitting the segmentation criteria are selected for recruitment at random until a maximum number of participants are reached. Also, depending on research objectives, different segments of non-customers interested in collecting or gifting coin products are recruited from local lists and are selected for recruitment at random until a maximum number of participants are reached.

Focus group discussions are facilitated by a professional moderator and different techniques are used to elicit feedback. A discussion guide will be utilized and serves as an outline, prepared in advance for the respondents, that covers the topics and issues to be explored. The guide is designed with the overall research questions in mind and is constructed to ensure that topics covered in the focus groups relate to these research objectives. The groups typically involve both structured and free flowing discussion exploring specific topics of interest related to our products and marketing activities. Materials are frequently provided to participants to facilitate feedback on the topic at hand.

These qualitative insights are used to understand the range of opinions and concerns that exist on a research topic, not to precisely quantify insights provided by respondents. Reports clearly indicate that the collected information is not generalizable and that it should be used solely to provide directional insights. Focus groups and other qualitative studies are an important complement to our quantitative research in that they provide deep insights into underlying consumer attitudes and preferences and are frequently used both to help explain observable trends and to provide direction for applied research topics. They are an important tool used by the Office of Numismatics (Sales and Marketing) to help develop and plan changes to products, policies and marketing activities.

## **Methods to Maximize Response Rates**

We expect one out of every seven customers contacted will agree to participate in the study. Cities will be selected based on concentration of customers. By recruiting in cities with a higher number of United States Mint customers, the likelihood of participation increases. Appropriate screeners will be set up to guarantee selection of the right customers for the study. A monetary incentive will be offered. This is a common industry practice.

### **Estimate of the Burden Hours**

The collection of information will include completion of 64 in-person focus groups. A total of up to 640 respondents will participate in the focus groups on an annual basis. These focus groups are expected to last 120 minutes. Therefore, the total estimated burden hours for this collection are:

	CSM Focus Groups – Annual
All respondents	480
Average minutes per group	120 mins
Total estimated burden hours	960 hrs

*If you have questions related to the review of this collection request, you may contact any of the following individuals at the United States Mint's Office of Sales and Marketing:*

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