

Summary of Treasury Retail Savings Points of Pain Qualitative Research

August 18, 2015

This document provides an overview of the Treasury Retail Savings Points of Pain qualitative research plan. This overview document describes the overall plan and explains the two study documents for OMB approval: the screening questionnaire that will be used to identify and recruit the research participants, and the discussion guide that will be used by moderators during the qualitative discussions. The qualitative research will be conducted among a broad cross-section of potential savers.

Purpose. The purpose of this project is to understand the real-life events, contexts and decision points that prevent Americans from having greater success with short, medium and long-term savings. Research will focus on the physical and emotional characteristics embedded in those moments that impact savings, the aspirations Americans have for saving, and the product attributes and benefits that would propel respondents toward their aspirations.

Approach. This research will be conducted in four markets through in-person focus groups with a cross-section of Americans. We will hold four focus groups in each of the four markets across the US for a total of 16 focus groups. One market will be selected in each of the following census regions: the Northeast, Midwest, South, and West.

The screening protocol is designed to recruit adult Americans, ages 21-70, who represent a cross-section of the population in terms of gender, race/ethnicity, age, income, education, employment status, debt, and asset levels. The groups will be homogenous by life-stage or un/underbanked status. Within each of the life-stage groups, there will be a roughly equal mix of those who are doing ok financially based on self assessment and those who are struggling financially with debt, low savings and/or low income.

Screening protocols will be used to recruit at least 128 participants (recruit at least 8 per focus group with 16 groups total) to assure 6 to 8 participants in each session (for a minimum of 96 total participants and expected average of 7 participants per group for a total of 112 participants).

The in-person focus group sessions will each last approximately 120 minutes. A professional moderator will conduct the focus group sessions. An incentive of \$75 will be paid to individuals participating in the focus groups.

Members of the Treasury and Federal Reserve project team will be able to attend the focus group sessions in person at the research facility or view them remotely via computer. These sessions will be recorded and available for viewing after the session for one year. A full report of findings will be prepared and presented by the research team.

Question focus. This research is designed to understand the real-life events, contexts and decision points that prevent Americans from having greater success with long-term

savings. Research will focus on the physical and emotional characteristics embedded in those moments that impact savings, the aspirations Americans have for saving, and the product attributes and benefits that would propel respondents toward their aspirations. The discussion will cover savings history including successes and barriers, aspirations for savings by type (such as emergency, vacation or holiday savings, planned large purchases, retirement, etc.) and timeframe (short, medium, and long-term), barriers to saving, challenges to saving success, saving product attributes and shortcomings, emotions and values associated with product shortcomings, product characteristics to address barriers, and exploratory product ideas. For details, see the discussion guide that accompanies this document.

Analysis. Analysis is designed to provide detailed diagnostic information on the range of aspirations, barriers, challenges, and emotions and values associated with saving product attributes and shortcomings. Findings will be used to aid in the development of a quantitative questionnaire on the same topic, to inform future stages of the overall project, to begin developing potential products for future testing, and to develop interim hypotheses about product portfolio opportunities and market barriers to overcome. A full report will be developed that will interpret and present the results as well as recommendations and implications.

Timing.

August – OMB Review

August – Development of materials to be tested

Late August to early September – Finalization of materials and recruiting of focus group participants

September – Conduct focus groups

October – Analyze and report on findings