

Supporting Statement
Approval Request to Conduct Customer Satisfaction Research
(OMB #1545-1432)
FY 2016 Taxpayer Advocate Service Customer Satisfaction Survey

A. JUSTIFICATION

1. Circumstances Making the Collection of Information Necessary

Executive Order 12862 requires all government agencies to survey their customers, and incorporate customer preferences in their process improvement efforts.¹

Internal Revenue Bulletin 2005-45 (November 7, 2005) describes that: “The customer satisfaction goals and accomplishments of operating units within the IRS will be determined on the basis of information gathered through various methods. For example, questionnaires, surveys and other types of information gathering mechanisms may be employed to gather data regarding customer satisfaction. Information to measure customer satisfaction for a particular work unit will be gathered from a statistically valid sample of the customers served by that operating unit and will be used to measure, among other things, whether those customers believe that they received courteous, timely, and professional treatment by the IRS personnel with whom they dealt. Customers will be permitted to provide information requested for these purposes under conditions that guarantee them anonymity. For purposes of this section, customers may include individual taxpayers, organizational units, or employees within the IRS and external groups affected by the services performed by the IRS operating unit.”²

2. Purpose and Use of the Information Collection

It is through this process that the Taxpayer Advocate Service (TAS) is able to establish and maintain an awareness of customer expectations, to identify gaps between customer expectations and organizational performance, and to better calibrate its services to meet customer expectations. Data collected will help TAS to identify the underlying causes of customer dissatisfaction in different types of case work and provide the basis for implementing appropriate organizational changes. TAS provides remedial services to 230,000 – 300,000 taxpayers per year; obtaining customer feedback about the timeliness and quality of TAS’s services from a sample of this group will enable TAS to improve its operations for the whole population.

TAS will collect, analyze, and interpret information gathered to identify strengths and weaknesses of current services and make improvements in service delivery based on feedback. The solicitation of feedback will target areas such as: timeliness, communication, knowledge, fairness and resolution of issues. Responses will be assessed to plan and inform efforts to improve or maintain the quality of service offered to the public.

¹ Reference: <http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/npr/library/direct/orders/2222.html>

² Reference: http://www.irs.gov/irb/2005-45_IRB/ar12.html

3. Consideration Given to Information Technology

The TAS Customer Satisfaction survey will be administered by mail on a monthly basis.

4. Duplication of Information

Similar data is not gathered or maintained by TAS or available from other sources known to TAS.

5. Reducing the Burden on Small Entities

Small business or other small entities may be involved in these efforts but TAS will minimize the burden on them by sampling and communicating with their representatives when appropriate. Additionally, this survey is voluntary; therefore entities have the option to not participate if they deem it too burdensome.

6. Consequences of Not Conducting Collection

Without this feedback, TAS will not have timely information to adjust its services to meet customer needs or address specific areas of customer dissatisfaction.

7. Special Circumstances

There are no special circumstances. The results received will not institute new policy, yet will enable TAS to effectively meet taxpayer needs.

8. Consultations with Persons Outside TAS

Not applicable.

9. Payment or Gift

TAS will not provide payment or other forms of remuneration to respondents of its customer satisfaction survey.

10. Confidentiality

Respondent's privacy will be protected to the extent allowed by law. Access to all case-related data are maintained by TAS employees on an IRS laptops. Access is restricted to the assigned owner of the laptop.

TAS will use specific identifying characteristics of either the taxpayer or his/her authorized representatives responding on behalf of the taxpayer (e.g., name, address, phone number, case number, etc.) for mailing purposes. The survey questionnaire will not have any of the identifying information of the respondent, but will be assigned a unique random number which can't be traced to the respondent. The data available to TAS will be restricted to: (a) responses to the survey questions; and (b) case characteristics.

11. Sensitive Nature

No questions will be asked that are of a personal or sensitive nature.

12. Burden of Information Collection

Our method of collection will be by written survey only. We will contact approximately 3,000 individuals to yield approximately 450 respondents. As required by the Printing Regulations, the survey correspondence to be mailed to the selected recipients will be printed by a GPO printer company that is managed by the IRS Media and Publications unit.

The annual burden hours requested of 125 hours are based on the number of collections we expect to conduct over the requested period for this clearance with an expected response rate of 15 Percent.³

Estimated Annual Reporting Burden				
Type of Collection	No. of Respondents	Annual Frequency per Response	Hours per Response	Total Hours
Recipients of written survey	3,000	--	1 minute or less	50
Expected Respondents	450	--	10 minutes	75
Totals				125

13. Costs to Respondents

No costs are anticipated.

14. Costs to Federal Government

The anticipated cost to the Federal Government is approximately \$2,500. These costs are comprised of printing costs.

15. Reason for Change

N/A

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. IRS will hold the identities of respondents private to the extent permitted by law. Responses from the paper survey questionnaires will be scanned and tabulated using survey software. The results will be compiled by TAS Research and a national customer satisfaction report will be prepared.

³ Response rate of 15% based on an initial projection of the rate for paper surveys.

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

June 2016 to October 2017.

B. STATISTICAL METHODS

1. Universe and Respondent Selection

Survey participants will be extracted from the closed cases in a random sample from the population of the closed cases for the month nationwide.

2. Procedures for Collecting Information

TAS will administer the survey by mail on a monthly basis. Respondents will complete a paper survey questionnaire and return it to TAS by postage-paid envelope. Responses from the paper survey questionnaires will be scanned and tabulated using survey software. The results will be compiled by TAS Research and a national customer satisfaction report will be prepared.

3. Methods to Maximize Response

Standard procedures will be used in order to obtain the highest response rate possible for a mail survey which can include: 1) Pre-notification postcard about the survey, 2) cover letter and questionnaire, 3) postcard reminder and 4) a cover letter and a copy of questionnaire to non-respondents.

4. Testing of Procedures

The current question content of the questionnaire has been tested as it has been used for three years in a telephone interview and online versions. If any changes are made, it is anticipated only minor changes will be made.

5. Contacts for Statistical Aspects and Data Collection

ATTACHMENTS-PDF Format

Exhibit A – Pre-Notification Letter

Exhibit B – Letter with Questions

Exhibit C – Reminder Card

Exhibit D – 3rd Letter with Questions

Exhibit E – Survey Questionnaire