

**Supporting Statement**  
**Information Collection (ICR) Approval Request to Conduct Customer Satisfaction**  
**Research (OMB #1545-1432)**

**Title: Taxpayer Advocate Service (TAS) Taxpayer Needs, Attitudes & Experience Survey**

**A. JUSTIFICATION**

**1. Circumstances Making the Collection of Information Necessary**

The Taxpayer Advocate Service (TAS) is an independent organization within the IRS. It is headed by the National Taxpayer Advocate. The mission of TAS is to help taxpayers resolve problems with the IRS and to recommend changes to prevent the problems.

IRS budget cuts between fiscal years (FY) 2010–2015 have resulted in an unacceptably poor level of taxpayer service. In response to this, TAS is developing a ranking methodology for the major taxpayer service activities of the IRS – a new ranking methodology that will take taxpayer needs and preferences into account, while balancing them against the IRS’s need to conserve limited resources.

The ranking methodology will assist the IRS in making resource allocation decisions that will optimize the delivery of taxpayer service activities given resource constraints. However, limitations imposed by the lack of available data have caused unacceptable delays in the development of the ranking methodology. In order to complete its ranking work, TAS needs insight into taxpayers’ needs, attitudes, and experiences and this information is not available from existing data sources.

**2. Purpose and Use of the Information Collection**

The principal objective of the survey is to collect the additional data needed to complete development of the TAS ranking methodology. In addition, TAS will collect data to track trends in taxpayer attitudes about such subjects as the fairness of the tax administration system. Research conducted by TAS and others has shown that taxpayers’ perceptions about the fairness of the tax administration process can affect their compliance behavior. The feedback obtained in the course of collecting this information will not institute new policy, but will enable TAS to help IRS more effectively meet taxpayer needs.

**3. Consideration Given to Information Technology**

TAS will administer the survey to taxpayers by telephone, with taxpayers selected for potential inclusion in the survey on a random, nth selection basis from a nationally representative random digit dialing (RDD) sample of U.S. Taxpayers. This sample will incorporate cell phone numbers as well as landline telephone numbers in their typical proportions (currently about 50% cell and 50% landline). TAS wants to make sure the sample is representative of all pertinent socioeconomics groups and segments of the population. TAS considered other survey options, but decided telephone surveys are the best option for reaching taxpayers across all income and education levels – especially those at lower socioeconomic levels, who may not have internet

access or be as comfortable in an online survey environment. Note: to assure compliance with the FCC's interpretation of the 1991 Telephone Consumer Protection Act (TCPA), all numbers will be screened by software that will determine which are cell phones and which are landlines, with each type of phone subsequently dialed on telephones that are compliant with the TCPA.

#### **4. Duplication of Information**

As noted earlier, the data collected in this survey will enable TAS to assist the IRS in making resource allocation decisions that will optimize the delivery of taxpayer service activities given resource constraints. The data will include taxpayer needs, attitudes, and experiences as they relate to IRS service activities – data which can then be incorporated into TAS' service ranking work. This specific information is not available from existing data sources.

#### **5. Reducing the Burden on Small Entities**

This is a survey of individual taxpayers and not small business or other small entities. Those groups would only be involved in the survey if: (a) they are taxpayers responding as individuals and (b) if they meet individual screening criteria and agree to participate. In addition, TAS will minimize the burden on all respondents by reminding them that participation in the survey is voluntary.

#### **6. Consequences of Not Conducting Collection**

Without this feedback, TAS and its National Taxpayer Advocate will not have the data that are necessary to enable TAS to meet its objective of developing service rankings – rankings that will help IRS make resource allocation decisions that also optimize delivery of services to taxpayers.

#### **7. Special Circumstances**

No special circumstances apply.

#### **8. Consultations with Persons Outside the Agency**

Pacific Consulting Group, Inc. was consulted for study design and data collection decisions.

#### **9. Payment or Gift**

No payment or gift is being made to survey participants.

#### **10. Confidentiality:**

TAS will provide privacy to the extent allowed by law. Personal or sensitive information will not be disclosed. Random digit dialing will be used to recruit survey respondents. Data security and limited use are contractually required of the vendor. All appropriate privacy requirements and background clearances will be obtained and followed. TAS will also control official access to the information and will not allow public access to the information. TAS will not ask for any information that could be used to identify the survey respondents.

The data returned to IRS will have no identifying information relating specific records to individual taxpayers. Information access will be tightly controlled. TAS will apply fair information and record-keeping practices to ensure protection of all taxpayers. 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.

TAS will limit and control the amount of information collected to those items that are necessary to accomplish research objectives. TAS will protect the privacy of the survey respondents to the extent allowed by law, by not using names in any reporting. Data will be maintained according to required record management guidelines.

**11. Sensitive Nature**

Any sensitive questions will relate to tax filing behavioral data collected in the survey. Otherwise, sensitive questions will be minimized and respondents will always be given the option of declining to answer a question if answering makes them uncomfortable.

**12. Burden of Information Collection**

The total burden for the survey is 1,777.8 hours. This estimate assumes the average time to complete the survey is 20 minutes and a 30 percent response rate. The time to determine participation is 2 minutes. We expect to contact 13,334 individuals (13,334 \* 2 minutes / 60 minutes = 444.5 hrs.). Of the potential participants contacted 4,000 (4,000 \* 20 minutes / 60 minutes = 1,333.3 hrs.) are expected to respond to the survey.

Type of Collection	Number of Participants	Minutes per person	Total Hours
Potential participants	13,334	2	444.5
Survey respondents	4,000	20	1,333.3
<b>Total Hours</b>			<b>1,777.8</b>

**13. Costs to Respondents**

There are no out-of-pocket costs for respondents.

**14. Costs to Federal Government**

The estimated cost of this survey is \$221,731.56.

**15. Reason for Change**

This is a new Request.

**16. Tabulation of Results, Schedule, Analysis Plans**

Pending OMB approval, the contractor will use the months of June and July for setup and training of field staff, questionnaire coding, and pre-testing using in-house staff. Assuming OMB

approval is received in early August, the contractor and sub-contractor will begin work on the RDD sample, interviewing, and validation of interviewers' work. The total expected time spent in fieldwork will be 6 weeks. That will be followed by a 2-week period of data processing and tabulation, and then another 2 weeks for preparation of the final report and data set. The anticipated delivery date is October 18, 2016. An optional presentation of findings by the contractor may follow.

The contractor's work on this project must conclude by the end of the Period of Performance for this Task Order – March 15, 2017.

Regarding analysis and summary reporting: survey responses will be summarized and compiled into a final report that provides a summary of key data findings by topic. This information will be used by TAS to assist the IRS in making resource allocation decisions that will optimize the delivery of taxpayer service activities given resource constraints. The data will include taxpayer needs, attitudes, and experiences as they relate to IRS service activities – data which can then be folded into TAS' service ranking work.

### **17. Display of OMB Approval Date**

### **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**

August 2, 2016 - September 16, 2016.

## **B. STATISTICAL METHODS**

The primary purpose of these collections will be for internal management purposes; there are currently no plans to publish the summary reports from this research.

### **1. Universe and Respondent Selection**

The population of interest is all U.S. taxpayers but especially those who have used IRS services in the past year. The contractor will use screening questions to select respondents that meet the qualifying criteria.

### **2. Procedures for Collecting Information**

Potential respondents in this survey will be contacted by trained telephone interviewers operating from the sub-contractor's facilities in Cherry Hill, NJ. Potential respondents will be selected from a random digit dialing (RDD) list of computer-generated telephone numbers in working telephone exchanges across the US. The vendor will provide the RDD list. This RDD list will include a representative proportion of landlines (50%) and cell/mobile (50%).

The vendor's telephone interviewing staff will screen survey candidates and identify potential respondents per the screening criteria detailed above. The telephone numbers of potential respondents will be dialed up to 10 times in order to establish contact with a potential respondent, with most of these dialings resulting in non-contact (number busy, voice-mail, non-working, etc.). After the first live contact with a potential respondent, interviewers will request their participation in the survey. If they agree, they will be screened for qualification and if qualified, interviewed at that time. If they do not agree/refuse, they will be re-contacted by a more senior interviewer who will also try to include them in the survey. If they then refuse again, this person will be recorded in call records as a refusal and not contacted again.

With the sample including 4,000 randomly-selected respondents, the normal yield of about 4-5% Spanish-speaking respondents should yield about 160-200 such respondents.

### **3. Methods to Maximize Response**

The vendor will strive to maximize response and cooperation rates among those respondents they call by: (1) using up to 10 attempts at live contact; (2) and by using more senior interviewers to try to convert refusals to completed surveys. Other factors increasing response rate are that: (3) the questionnaire length is being minimized to reduce respondent burden and (4) respondents are assured anonymity of their responses.

### **4. Testing of Procedures**

Pending OMB approval, the contractor will use the months of June and July for setup and training of field staff, questionnaire coding, and pre-testing using in-house staff. Assuming OMB approval is received in early August, the contractor and sub-contractor will begin work on the RDD sample, interviewing, and validation of interviewers' work.

### **5. Contacts for Statistical Aspects and Data Collection**

Several contacts will be available for assistance with the statistical requirements. TAS Research will provide analysts with expertise in statistics to assist this effort. The contractor will provide experts with knowledge of statistics as well.

Primary Contact: Carol Hatch, TAS Research, Project Manager (PM) – 501 396-5954 or [carol.m.hatch@irs.gov](mailto:carol.m.hatch@irs.gov)

Secondary Contact: Jeff Wilson, TAS Research, Government Task Manager (GTM) – 317 685-7673 or [jeff.a.wilson@irs.gov](mailto:jeff.a.wilson@irs.gov)