

Supporting Statement

Approval Request to Conduct Customer Satisfaction Research

Return Preparer Office Customer Satisfaction Survey

A. JUSTIFICATION

1. Circumstances Making the Collection of Information Necessary

The IRS Return Preparer Office (RPO) Continuing Education Department is conducting an online survey to measure customer satisfaction for IRS Continuing Education (CE) Providers using the online IRS CE Provider system known as CE-PRATS. The RPO Continuing Education Department has a contractual obligation with the external vendor, Advocation Strategies, Inc., to perform a survey of the CE-PRATS system users. Feedback from IRS customers (IRS Approved CE Providers) is very important to assess the current satisfaction rate and to evaluate the system's ease of use and to consider needed improvement efforts if necessary.

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) enlists a balanced measurement system consisting of business results, customer satisfaction and employee satisfaction. This initiative is part of the Service-wide effort to maintain a system of balanced organizational performance measures mandated by the IRS Restructuring and Reform Act (RRA) of 1998. This is also a result of Executive Order 12862 that requires all government agencies to survey their customers.

2. Purpose and Use of the Information Collection

The primary goals of the survey are to measure customer satisfaction, and to improve efficiency and usability of the CE-PRATS system.

3. Consideration Given to Information Technology

The survey questionnaire will be accessible on line via the CE-PRATS system when IRS CE Providers visit their online CE provider secured account.

4. Efforts Not to Duplicate Research

This is the only study being conducted by the IRS to measure the satisfaction of IRS Approved Continuing Education providers regarding vendor performance (Advocation Strategies, Inc.).

5. Reducing the Burden on Small Entities

The survey is open to all approved IRS Continuing Education Providers. The current population of providers range from large to small businesses. We do not have a way of knowing how many small business providers there are because we do not collect that data.

The RPO Customer Satisfaction Survey has been designed to minimize burden. The time that a respondent takes to complete the survey has been carefully considered and only the most important areas are being surveyed. Additionally, since the survey will be conducted online, hosting the survey through the providers' accounts should reduce burden. The maximum time for completion of the survey is expected to be 5 minutes. We have made every attempt in designing this survey to maximize the response rate.

6. Consequences of Not Conducting Collection

If the survey is not conducted, the Return Preparer Office (RPO) Department of the IRS will not be able to measure external customer satisfaction, or efficiency and usability of the vendor's system. Feedback from customers is critical to assess perceptions of the new CE-PRATS system and to help develop system improvement actions. Without the survey feedback, we would not know what system improvements are needed to improve efficiency from a customer/user standpoint, and our vendor would be unable to fulfill one of their contractual obligations.

7. Special Circumstances

There are no special circumstances. The information collected will be completely voluntary for all IRS CE Providers using the CE-PRATS system.

8. Consultations with Persons Outside

No persons outside the agency and the vendor (Advocation Strategies, Inc.) will be consulted with regards to their views on the availability of data, frequency of collection, the clarity of instructions and recordkeeping, disclosure, or reporting format (if any), and on the data elements to be recorded, disclosed, or reported.

9. Payment of Gift

No payments or gifts will be made to participants.

10. Confidentiality

The survey will not contain tax return or taxpayer information. Survey participants will not be identified in any of the documents or files used for this project. We will limit and control the amount of information we collect to those items that are necessary to accomplish the research questions. We will carefully safeguard the security of data utilized as well as the privacy of the survey respondents to the extent allowed by law. We will apply the fair information and record-keeping practices to ensure protection of all survey respondents be kept private to the extent allowed by law. 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 information as well as its releases to authorized recipients.

11. Sensitive Nature

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

12. Burden of Information Collection

The RPO Continuing Education Provider Customer Satisfaction Survey has been designed to minimize burden. The time that a respondent takes to complete the survey has been carefully considered and only the most important areas are being surveyed.

There are currently 545 IRS CE Providers. All will be asked to participate in the survey and we assume a 30% response rate to yield 164 completed surveys.

The time it takes to solicit participation is 1 minute, resulting in 9 burden hours (545 contacts x 1 minute/60 = 9 hours).

It is estimated to take 5 minutes to complete each of the 164 surveys; resulting in 14 burden hours (164 participants x 5 minutes/60 = 14 burden hours).

The total burden is 23 hours (9 +14 = 23)

| Category of Respondent | No. of Respondents | Participation Time (in minutes)* | Burden (in hours) |
|---|--------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| Requesting IRS CE Providers to take survey | 545 | 1 minute | 9 hrs (1min*950 providers= 950 min) or 16 hours (545/60) |
| IRS CE Providers that participate in survey | 164 | 5 min | 14 hrs (5min*164 prvdrs= 820 min) or 14 hrs (820/60) |
| Totals | | 6 min (1+5min) | 23 hrs (9+14 hrs) |

Estimated Response Rate: 30%

13. Costs to Respondents

There is no cost to respondents resulting from the collection of information.

14. Costs to Federal Government

None - Contractual obligation of vendor (Advocation Strategies, Inc.)

15. Reason for Change

No change is being requested. This is a new request

16. Tabulation of Results, Schedule, and Analysis Plans

When IRS CE Providers use the CE-PRATS online CE Provider system, they will be asked to take the survey online. The RPO CE division will receive survey results information from the vendor (Advocation Strategies, Inc.) in a consolidated and timely fashion as the CE Providers take the online survey.

The survey results from the IRS Approved CE Providers will play a very important part to evaluate the system ease of use and to consider needed improvement efforts if necessary.

17. Display of OMB Approval Date

IRS is seeking approval to not display the expiration date for OMB approval, as this is a one-time, limited-duration collection

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

October 1, 2017 and ending June 30, 2018.

B. STATISTICAL METHODS

The primary purpose of these collections will be for internal management purposes; there are no plans to publish or otherwise release this information. The RPO Customer Satisfaction survey is attached. The survey asks respondents to evaluate various aspects of the CE-PRATS system. The results should facilitate more effective vendor services of by providing insight from the customer's perspective about possible improvements. The surveys include several rating questions evaluating the vendor's system (CE-PRATS). Satisfaction questions will utilize a 5-point rating scale, with 1 being strongly agree and 5 being strongly disagree.

1. Universe and Respondent Selection

IRS CE Providers will be asked to take the survey during October 1, 2017 – June 30, 2018.

2. Procedures for Collecting Information

IRS RPO Continuing Education Department vendor Advocation Strategies, Inc. will be responsible for collecting the data and the IRS RPO Department will be responsible for conducting the data analysis and making final recommendations for enhancements to the vendor. When IRS CE Providers use the CE-PRATS online CE Provider system, they will be asked to take the survey online. The RPO CE Department will receive survey results information from the vendor (Advocation Strategies, Inc.) in a consolidated and timely fashion as the CE Providers take the online survey.

3. Methods to Maximize Response

RPO Continuing Education Department will attempt to achieve an overall 30% response rate in the surveys. We plan to maximize the response rate by allowing CE Providers to access the survey when they log into the system between 10/01/17-06/30/18. The system will have pop-up messages to catch the CE Providers attention regarding the option to take the survey. Additionally, we plan to announce the survey opportunity via other communication means such as conference calls, newsletters, and in the News & Alerts section on their provider page, or through secured emails in their CE Provider secure mailbox. Please reference the attachment titled "**Customer Satisfaction Survey**". The first tab in the document is titled " **Screener Solicitation & Survey**" displays the wording that will be used in the pop-up screener solicitations prior to respondents taking the survey. The second tab in the document is titled "**System Language**" contains the email solicitation language that will be used in the email solicitation to the provider's secured email accounts. Both tabs display the basic language that will be used in all survey solicitation announcements.

4. Testing of Procedures

User Acceptance Testing (UAT) will be conducted by the IRS CE Team prior to announcing/launching the survey to CE Providers to ensure system business and technical requirements are met. Generally, several CE team members (2-5) will practice taking the survey on our staging site to ensure it is working as expected and notifying the vendor (Advocation Strategies, Inc.) if any bugs are discovered so they can be fixed before it is deployed to the production site and becomes live for CE Providers.

5. Contacts for Statistical Aspects and Data Collection

For questions regarding the study, questionnaire design or statistical methodology, contact:

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