

Supporting Statement
Approval Request to Conduct Customer Satisfaction Research (OMB #1545-1432)
Enrolled Agent Special Enrollment Examination

A. JUSTIFICATION

1. Circumstances Making the Collection of Information Necessary

The IRS Return Preparer Office's (RPO) mission is to improve taxpayer compliance by providing comprehensive oversight and support of tax professionals. The RPO oversees registration, testing, and suitability of Enrolled Agents (EA) and EA candidates. EAs, like attorneys and Certified Public Accountants (CPA), have unlimited practice rights to represent taxpayers before the IRS. This means they are unrestricted as to which taxpayers they can represent, what types of tax matters they can address, and which IRS offices they can represent taxpayers before.

The RPO's Competency & Standards Department provides oversight of the Special Enrollment Examination (SEE) for EA candidates. The RPO entered a contract with Prometric, Inc. to develop and administer the SEE (contract number TIRNO-15-C-00043) beginning on May 1, 2016. A voluntary customer satisfaction survey offered at the end of the SEE will serve several purposes: it will allow RPO and Prometric to evaluate the candidate's perception of the testing process to improve the candidate's experience; the survey will allow the RPO to measure customer satisfaction to assist with evaluating Prometric's performance consistent with contract requirements; and it will provide information on test center locations in relation to distance traveled which will be considered when new test centers are opened.

2. Purpose and Use of the Information Collection

In addition to the objective of measuring customer satisfaction to meet contractual requirements, the RPO will use survey feedback to identify improvement opportunities and as the basis for enacting improvements. The goal of the survey is to obtain feedback on an ongoing basis to improve the examination and the candidate experience with Prometric's website, call center, and test centers.

3. Consideration Given to Information Technology

The survey will be electronically administered through Prometric's secure testing system. Upon completion of the examination, a survey introduction screen will be presented and candidates will have the option of either participating in or declining the survey.

4. Duplication of Information

This is the only survey offered to EA candidates by the IRS.

5. Reducing the Burden on Small Entities

The survey will be offered to individuals taking the examination and is not applicable to small entities.

6. Consequences of Not Conducting Collection

If the survey is not offered, the RPO and Prometric will not be able to measure customer satisfaction on the test content, effectiveness of Prometric's webpage and scheduling system, and customer satisfaction with respect to Prometric's test center environment and staff performance.

7. Special Circumstances

There are no special circumstances. The survey will be administered to examinees on a voluntary basis.

8. Consultations with Persons Outside the Agency

The survey questions were jointly drafted by Prometric and RPO and approved by RPO Executives.

9. Payment or Gift

Survey participants do not receive payment or gift for participating in the survey.

10. Confidentiality

The survey will not contain tax return information, taxpayer information, or personally identifiable information of examinees. The RPO and Prometric will not respond to examinees’ comments. Survey comments will be associated with the test center location number where the examination was administered. This will allow Prometric to act quickly in the event of a complaint. The RPO will limit and control the amount of information we collect to those items that are necessary to evaluate the program and measure customer satisfaction as is required in the contract.

The RPO will apply and meet the fair information and record-keeping practices to ensure privacy of all survey respondents to the extent allowed by law. The criterion for disclosure laid out in the Privacy Act of 1974, the Freedom of Information Act, and section 6103 of the Internal Revenue Code provides for the protection of information as well as its release to authorized recipients.

11. Sensitive Nature

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

12. Burden of Information Collection

The customer satisfaction survey has been designed to minimize burden on respondents. The time that a respondent takes to complete the survey has been carefully considered and only the most important areas are being surveyed.

Approximately 20,000 examinations are administered annually. The customer satisfaction survey will be offered after each examination. The contact time to determine participants is estimated to be up to 1 minute to read the survey introduction screen. The burden hours would be 333 annually (20,000 x 1 minute / 60 = 333 hours). The average time to complete the survey is projected to be 3 minutes. Of the approximate 20,000 test takers, based on the prior year’s participation rate, we estimate 77% will participate in the survey (20,000 x .77 = 15,400) leaving 4,600 non-participants. The burden hours would be 770 annually (15,400 x 3 minutes / 60 = 770 hours). The total burden hours for the survey would be 1,103 annually (333 + 770 = 1,103).

Category of Respondents	Participation	Response Time (Minutes)	Total Burden (Hours)
Potential Respondents	20,000	1	333
Expected Participants	15,400	3	770
Total Burden Hours			1,103

13. Costs to Respondents

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

14. Costs to Federal Government

There is no cost to the Federal Government. As is required in the contract, Prometric has included all costs of administering the program in the fee they charge to examinees.

15. Reason for Change

This is a new request.

16. Tabulation of Results, Schedule, Analysis Plans

Prometric will capture the electronic survey results from each test center daily. Survey results will be housed in EasyServe, a vendor-owned secure reporting portal. The RPO will be able to access cumulative survey data for any date ranges or test center location number through the secure reporting portal. This data will not include any PII.

Additionally, Prometric will provide the RPO a written survey summary on a quarterly basis. The summary report will include an analysis of survey feedback and any recommendations to improve customer satisfaction with the testing process and service delivery program. The summary reports will include the beginning and ending dates of the survey period, the number of surveys offered, the number of survey responses received, the participation rate, and the survey results by question including the percentage of respondents that selected each multiple-choice response (for example, Question 1: 95.2 % very satisfied, 3.0% satisfied, 1.5% dissatisfied, .3% very dissatisfied). The summary report will not include any PII.

The RPO will regularly review survey data and will immediately address with Prometric any feedback indicating a problem, such as a problem with a test question or test center. The quarterly survey summary will be reviewed with Prometric and improvement opportunities will be addressed as appropriate.

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 collection.

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

May 1, 2018 – February 28, 2019

The customer satisfaction survey will be offered during each of the four annual testing windows required in the contract. Because OMB approvals are generally valid for 1 year, previous requests covered the first two testing windows and this request covers the third testing window. A subsequent request will be submitted for the remaining testing window. The testing windows are:

- o May 1, 2016 – February 28, 2017
- o May 1, 2017 – February 28, 2018
- o **May 1, 2018 – February 28, 2019**
- o May 1, 2019 – February 29, 2020

B. STATISTICAL METHODS

1. Universe and Respondent Selection

All SEE examinees will be offered the survey upon completion of the examination.

2. Procedures for Collecting Information

Prometric will electronically capture survey results then place the data in a secure reporting portal for the RPO to access. This data contains no PII.

3. Methods to Maximize Response

The RPO anticipates a marginally-high participation rate since the SEE population is relatively small and the survey is short.

4. Testing of Procedures

Prometric will be responsible for providing the computer-based survey. Prometric's computer-based survey process has been used for years to administer and gather survey data for many other clients. The IRS has determined that Prometric's system meets all Government data security requirements.

5. Contacts for Statistical Aspects and Data Collection

For questions regarding the survey or statistical methodology, contact:

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