

Supporting Statement  
Approval Request to Conduct Customer Satisfaction Research  
(OMB #1545-1432)  
FY 2019 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.<sup>1</sup>

Internal Revenue Bulletin 2005-45 (November 7, 2005) states: “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.”<sup>2</sup>

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

History of customer satisfaction surveys within the Taxpayer Advocate Service:

The Taxpayer Advocate Service organization (TAS) of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has been conducting customer satisfaction surveys since calendar year 2001. These surveys gauge the quality and timeliness of services that are delivered to taxpayers and their representatives who have recently sought TAS assistance. These surveys are a component of TAS’ organizational performance measurement system, or “balanced performance measures,” which also include employee engagement and business measures.

It is through this process 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 upwards of 167,000 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.

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

<sup>2</sup> Reference: [http://www.irs.gov/irb/2005-45\\_IRB/ar12.html](http://www.irs.gov/irb/2005-45_IRB/ar12.html)

TAS will collect, analyze, and interpret information gathered to identify strengths and weaknesses of current services and make recommendations to improve or maintain the quality of service offered to the public. The solicitation of information will target areas such as: timeliness, communication, knowledge, fairness and resolution of issues.

### **3. Consideration Given to Information Technology**

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

### **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. The estimate for the number of Small Business records is from 3% to 4% of the total population available to sample. 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**

No one outside the IRS or TAS was consulted for this survey.

### **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 is maintained by TAS employees on 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. Based on a sample of 47,000 potential respondents and a response rate of 26 percent, we expect to receive approximately 12,220 respondents with 34,780 non-participants. The contact time is based on 1 minute to read the pre-notification letter resulting in 783 hours. These hours are computed as follows: 47,000 x 1 minute = 783 burden hours. For respondents, the time to complete the survey is 10 minutes reflecting the time to read the pre-notification letter and complete the survey. The total hours for respondents is 2,036 hours computed by 12,220 respondents' x 10 minutes. The total burden hours for the survey is (783 + 2,036) = 2,819 hours.

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.

Category of Respondent	No. of Respondents	Participation Time (in minutes)	Burden (in Hours)
Non-participants	47,000	1 minute or less	783
Expected Respondents	12,220	10 minutes	2,036
<b>Totals</b>			<b>2,819</b>

**13. Costs to Respondents**

There will be no costs to respondents for completing the survey.

**14. Costs to Federal Government**

The anticipated cost to the Federal Government is approximately \$36,000 to \$43,000. These costs are comprised of printing costs.

**15. Reason for Change**

No change is requested. This is a new request for approval. TAS is planning to conduct the customer satisfaction survey at the national, area and office level.

## **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. 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 Business Assessment (BA). TAS Research and BA will prepare a national, area and office customer satisfaction reports from the collected data.

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

TAS 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**

November 2018 to June 2020.

## 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 each month of the collection period nationwide of fiscal year 2019.

### 2. Procedures for Collecting Information

TAS will administer the survey by mail monthly. 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, area and office customer satisfaction reports will be prepared.

### 3. Methods to Maximize Response

Standard procedures will be used to obtain the highest response rate possible for a mail survey which can include: 1) Pre-notification letter regarding 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 questionnaire has been tested as it has been used for two years in a paper survey. If any changes are made, it is anticipated only minor changes will be made.

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

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#### **ATTACHMENTS**-PDF Format

Exhibit A – Pre-Notification Letter – Taxpayer  
Exhibit B – Pre-Notification Letter – POAs  
Exhibit C – Pre-Notification Letter – Businesses  
Exhibit D – Cover Letter with Questions  
Exhibit E – Reminder Card  
Exhibit F – Cover (2<sup>nd</sup>) Letter with Questions  
Exhibit G – Survey Questionnaire