

SUPPORTING STATEMENT
Approval Request to Conduct Customer Satisfaction Research
W&I Taxpayer Experience Survey (TES) Follow-up Focus Groups

A. JUSTIFICATION

1. Circumstances Making the Collection of Information 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.

Wage and Investment (W&I) conducts transactional customer satisfaction surveys to obtain satisfaction ratings and customer feedback on various aspects of the customer's experience. While some of the surveys do address pre-filing and filing concerns, they do so reactively: i.e., the customer takes the initiative because of a problem, issue, or question they have, and those functions respond as best they can. Relatively little is known about the pre-filing and filing needs and preferences of the general W&I market segment; i.e., those taxpayers who have minimal or no contact with W&I beyond filing their tax returns.

2. Purpose and Use of the Information Collection

The objective of this task is to do follow-up research on the Taxpayer Experience Survey.

The key goal of this research is to drill down into areas of interest as indicated by the findings from the Taxpayer Experience Survey.

3. Consideration Given to Information Technology

The Taxpayer Experience Survey provides insight into the needs, opinions, and behaviors of the overall 1040 filer population. A contractor will administer four telephone focus groups containing approximately eight participants each.

4. Efforts Not to Duplicate Research

These will be the only focus groups associated with the FY 2016 TES and the TES is the only study currently conducted that provides the opportunity to hear from W&I's full taxpayer base on a broad range of customer service issues, with the objective of identifying how to prioritize strategies for improving customer satisfaction.

5. Reducing the Burden on Small Entities

Small entities are not involved in this research. The focus group follow-up research has been designed to minimize burden on respondents. The time to participate in the focus groups has been carefully considered. Each respondent will be allowed to participate in only one focus group. This will aid in decreasing respondent burden.

6. Consequences of Not Conducting Collection

Without conducting the TES, Wage & Investment would be unable to meet corporate goals and would fall short of meeting the IRS Mission of a Balanced Measurement System. Without the focus group follow-up research, the survey will be less effective at providing IRS with information about W&I taxpayers. The follow-up focus groups provide an opportunity to add the richness of a qualitative component to the overall research endeavor.

7. Special Circumstances

There are no special circumstances. The information collected will be voluntary and will not be used for statistical purposes.

8. Consultations with Persons Outside the IRS

The same contractor that administered the TES will conduct these focus groups.

9. Payment of Gift

Each participant will receive points with a value of \$40 for each one hour focus group.

The justification for this is that without it, the contractor may not be able to attract subjects to participate in this study. Offering incentives for participating in this type of research is a standard industry practice.

10. Confidentiality

All participants will be subject to the provisions of the Taxpayer Bill of Rights II during this study and the vendor will ensure that all participants are treated fairly and appropriately.

The security of the data used in this project and the privacy to the extent allowed by law of taxpayers will be carefully safeguarded at all times. Security requirements are based on the Computer Security Act of 1987 and Office of Management and Budget Circular A-130, Appendices A & B. Physical security measures include a locked, secure office. Notes are stored in locked cabinets or shredded. Data security at the C-2 level is accomplished via the Windows NT operating system. Systems are password protected, users profiled for authorized use, and individual audit trails generated and reviewed periodically.

The IRS will apply and meet fair information and record-keeping practices to ensure privacy to the extent allowed by law to the extent allowed by law protection of all taxpayers. This includes criteria for disclosure—laid out in the Privacy to the extent allowed by law Act of 1974, the Freedom of Information Act, and Section 6103 of the Internal Revenue Code—all of which provide for the protection of taxpayer information as well as its release to authorized recipients.

The focus groups will not contain or collect tax return or taxpayer information. Focus group 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 to the extent allowed by law of the survey respondents. We will apply the fair information and record-keeping practices to ensure protection of all survey respondents. The criterion for disclosure laid out in the Privacy to the extent allowed by law 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 a personal or sensitive nature.

12. Burden of Information Collection

The focus groups have been designed to minimize burden on the respondents. The time that a respondent takes to participate in the focus group has been carefully considered and only the most important areas are being discussed. The respondent will participate in only one focus group. This will aid in decreasing respondent burden.

Approximately 1,025 individuals will see the screener invitation 1 minute ($1025 * 1/60 = 17$) and about 25% of those, or 300, will complete the screener. The screener will take most respondents approximately two minutes ($300 * 2/60 = 10$ hours). In the screener, about 10%, or 30 ($30 * 4/60 = 2$) participants will receive email reminders and a copy of the informed consent prior to participating in the one hour ($30 * 1 = 30$) focus groups. **The total burden is 29 (screening/correspondence) + 30 (participation) = 59**

BURDEN HOURS

Category of Respondent	No. of Respondents	Participation Time	Burden Hours
<i>Max number of focus group participants</i>	30	<i>60 minutes</i>	30
<i>Screener invitation</i>	1,025	<i>1 minute</i>	17
<i>Screener completion</i>	300	<i>2 minutes</i>	10
<i>Email Reminder #1</i>	30	<i>1 minute</i>	30 min
<i>Informed Consent</i>	30	<i>2 minutes</i>	1
<i>Email Reminder #2</i>	30	<i>1 minute</i>	30 min
Totals			59

Maximum Total Burden = 59 hrs

13. Costs to Respondents

There is no cost to respondents; they receive an incentive.

14. Costs to Federal Government

\$22,168

15. Reason for Change

No change is being requested. This is a new request

16. Tabulation of Results, Schedule, and 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 survey improvement, but are not for publication or other public release.

The recruiting of the sample is the responsibility of the contractor.

The 30 or fewer participants will provide qualitative insights to supplement survey responses.

The contractor will use the analysis of this qualitative information to augment the information obtained from of the survey responses.

The contractor will hold the identities of respondents anonymous to the extent permitted by law. The contractor will not provide the IRS with data or status updates that are linked to individual respondents. This data will not include any individually identifying information such as name, address, or taxpayer identification number.

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

Collection will begin as early as January 1, 2018 and will end prior to May 15, 2018.

B. STATISTICAL METHODS

Data collection will not apply statistical methods. A qualitative analysis of respondents' experiences with the survey will be performed. There are no plans to publish or otherwise release this information.

1. Universe and Respondent Selection

The sampling frame consists of W&I taxpayers. The contractor will schedule 30 out of 300 potential participants with the expectation that 30 will participate in the focus groups. There will be four groups.

The participants will be recruited by the contractor through the internet using the contractor's contacts.

2. Procedures for Collecting Information

The contractor will recruit participants for the focus groups and will be responsible for establishing procedures for data collection. The contractor will prepare the data and conduct data analysis in accordance with accepted industry standard procedures.

The contractor will conduct focus groups by telephone. The contractor will recruit no more than 30 participants for four focus groups; that quantity is sufficient to explore relevant themes discovered through analysis of the survey data. It is expected that the actual number of participants will be much lower.

3. Methods to Maximize Response

Standard procedures will be used to obtain the highest response rate possible for the TES follow-up focus groups. The Contractor will recruit focus group participants and conduct the focus groups. To encourage participation, the contractor will be offering a \$40 point incentive to focus group participants.

4. Testing of Procedures

The purpose for this OMB approval application is to conduct TES follow-up focus group research based on survey findings.

5. Contacts for Statistical Aspects and Data Collection

For questions regarding the pretest, contact:

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The Paperwork Reduction Act requires that the IRS display an OMB control number on all public information requests along with the address where you can send comments regarding the study. “The OMB number for this study is 1545-1349. If you have any comments regarding this study, please write to: **IRS, Special Services Committee, SE:W:CAR:MP:T:M:S – Room 6129, 1111 Constitution Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20224.**”

Attachments

Moderator’s guide
Screener