

# CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE, EXPECTATIONS, AND NEEDS (CEEN) FOCUS GROUP MODERATOR GUIDE INTERNET PLATFORM FOR FORM 1099

## MODERATOR GUIDE

### WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS (5 MIN)

Thank you all for dialing in today. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I will be your moderator for this discussion. I work for ICF, an independent research firm. We're here today because the IRS wants to know more about your experiences with preparing and filing 1099 tax forms. The overall goal of the research is to help the IRS provide better service to taxpayers like you.

As part of our discussion we will review screenshots of potential tools that could help business owners file 1099 tax forms. Our discussion will take about one hour. I am an independent researcher and did not create this online tool. I would like to know your real attitudes and feelings, so please be as open and frank with me as you can.

Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary, and everything that you say will be kept private. We will not use your names in any report so feel free to tell me what you think.

Please note that there are people who are listening into the discussion. Some are coworkers of mine listening in to take notes on the discussion. Others are IRS researchers and are simply listening in to hear things firsthand before the report comes out; they have all signed an observer confidentiality agreement.

This session will be audio recorded. This allows us to capture everything that is being said today, and we will include the aggregate information in a report to our client. Your responses will only be reviewed by the ICF project team and we will not tie your name to anything specific you say today in our report to our client.

**Do you all consent to recording this session?**

**[RECORD]**

I also am required to let you know that for the IRS to speak with the public, we are required to have approval from the Office of Management and Budget. Their approval number for this project is 1545-1349. If you have any comments regarding this study, I can provide you with the mailing address you can write to with comments.

### CURRENT PRACTICES (20 MINUTES)

**Q1.** How would you describe the primary function of your business?

a. Probe: In what industry do you operate? What does your business do?

**Q2.** How familiar are you with your business' Federal and State filing and reporting requirements for Forms 1099?

**Q3.** Within your business, how many different individuals have the permissions or roles to file tax returns?

a. Probe: Do you have any partners, secretaries, tax department heads, or other people with Power of Attorney who are authorized to file tax returns on behalf of your business?

**Q4.** How many 1099s do you file on average (in a given tax year)?

- a. Probe: You can provide a range. Is it less than 10? 10 to 50? 50-100? etc.

**Q5.** How does your business typically send 1099 tax forms to recipients or payees?

- a. Probe: Paper mail, E-mail, Fax, delivered in person?

**Q6.** How do you generally prepare Forms 1099?

- a. Probe: Does a tax professional prepare for you?
- b. Probe: Do you prepare paper forms, or do you use 3<sup>rd</sup>-party website or accounting software like QuickBooks or TurboTax?

[BACKGROUND: FIRE REQUIRES FORMATTED BULK SUBMISSIONS; NEW PORTAL IS MORE USER-FRIENDLY]

- c. What works well with this preparation method?
- d. Are there any challenges associated with this preparation method?

**Q7.** How do you generally file Forms 1099?

- a. Probe: Through a Tax professional, via Paper, e-filed through accounting software, e-filed through 3<sup>rd</sup>-partywebsite, or e-filed through the FIRE tool (Filing Information Returns Electronically) on IRS.gov

[BACKGROUND: FIRE REQUIRES FORMATTED BULK SUBMISSIONS; NEW PORTAL IS MORE USER-FRIENDLY]

- b. What works well with this filing method?

Probe: Are there specific features that work well? Upload capabilities? Ease of use?

- c. Are there any challenges associated with this filing method?

**Q9.** Are you aware that the IRS is creating an online tool for Form 1099 preparation and filing?

- a. Yes
- b. No

**Q10.** What features would you expect to see from an IRS.gov tool for 1099 preparation and filing?

- a. How would you expect it to differ from the current tools you use?
- b. What is the most important feature from your perspective?

PROTOTYPE (30 MINUTES)

The IRS is developing a tool in which business owners can prepare, track, and file 1099 tax forms on IRS.gov for free. We are going to look at a series of screenshots of the 1099 Online Tool in development and I will ask for your feedback regarding specific processes.

Let's begin...

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[SCREENSHOT 1]

[pg.1] This screenshot shows the potential layout and features offered in the tool.

**Q11.** What are your initial thoughts when you see this dashboard?

- a. Probe: Is there anything you find confusing?
- b. Probe: Are there any additional features you would expect to see on this screen? Is there anything missing?
- c. Probe: Which of the features on this homepage do you see yourself using? Is there anything you would never use?

**Q12.**

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[SCREENSHOT 2-8]

The following 7 screenshots show the information you would be asked to provide when starting a new 1099 form. I'll walk through the steps and then ask for your feedback.

[MODERATOR: SCROLL THRU PAGES AND ZOOM IN AS NEEDED]

- [pg. 2] You would first select a type of 1099 form
- [pg. 3] Then input your payer information
- [pg. 4] Then input the recipient's information
- [pg. 5] Then select your payment types (the tool will present a screen for you to input dollar amounts).
- [pg. 6] Then you can review your information for any errors and file directly from IRS.gov
- [pg. 7] Here is the confirmation page.

**Q13.** What are your initial thoughts when you see this process?

- a. Is there anything you like in particular?
- b. Is there anything you find confusing?
- c. Is there anything missing?
- d. Is there anything you would change?

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SCREENSHOT 9-11

The following 3 screenshots show how you could track, file, and download multiple 1099s.

- [pg. 8] You would first click on "View All Forms" under "Recent 1099 Forms"
- [pg. 9] Then you could select forms from search and filter results
- [pg. 10] Then print or file the selected forms directly from IRS.gov
- [pg. 11] The tool would show a summary of your filed 1099s

**Q14.** What are your initial thoughts when you see this process?

- a. Is there anything you like in particular?
- b. Is there anything you find confusing?
- c. Is there anything missing?
- d. Is there anything you would change?

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GENERAL

**Q15.** What is your overall impression of this free tool? Do you see yourself potentially using it in the future?

- a. What are the primary reasons you would/wouldn't use it?
- b. What do you like best about the tool?
- c. What do you like the least about the tool?
- d. Is there anything missing that you would like or need?
- e. What formatting/visual elements of online account do you like or don't like in particular?

**Q16.** How does this potential 1099 tool compare to your current preparation and filing methods?

- a. Probe: Would it provide the same benefits? Fewer? More?

**Q17.** On the screen are some potential features of a website for e-filing 1099s directly with the IRS. I'd like to rank these in the order of importance to you. Please take a moment to review these and let me know which you consider to be the most important or useful from your perspective.

**[MODERATOR: IN THIS GROUP EXERCISE, RANK THE ITEMS FROM MOST TO LEAST IMPORTANT BY SORTING LITTLE BOXES ON SCREEN. INVOLVE ALL PARTICIPANTS AND CALL ON THEM IF NECESSARY.]**

- a. Prepare 1099 forms by tax year
- b. Upload spreadsheet of 1099 data to auto-populate 1099 forms
- c. Download and track 1099 forms to distribute to recipients
- d. Submit multiple 1099 forms at the same time
- e. Dedicated customer service support for issues and questions
- f. Notifications based on form status, due dates, and required actions
- g. Combined filing of federal and state information
- h. View, search, and filter previously submitted 1099 forms
- i. Autofill 1099 forms based on previously submitted form data

**Q18.** If the 1099 e-filing tool provided access to previously submitted form data, what historical data would you expect the tool to have available?

- a. Probe: What historical data does your current 1099 filing method provide? What additional data would you like it to provide?

**Q19.** How would you like to be informed of an online tool for e-filing 1099s? What communication would you like to receive from the IRS regarding this upcoming tool, if any?

**Q20.** The IRS would like to make this 1099 e-filing tool easy to find and use for taxpayers. If you needed to find this tool through a search engine or IRS.gov, what key words or phrases would you search for?

- a. What name would you give this tool that would be easy for you to remember and to find it on IRS.gov?

[MODERATOR: TURN THIS INTO SHORT BRAINSTORMING EXERCISE AND WRITE OPTIONS ON SCREEN IF HELPFUL FOR THIS PURPOSE]

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Thinking about our discussion today, is there anything else you would like to share with me about 1099 preparation and filing?

Thank you very much for coming and sharing your ideas with me. I appreciate your time. Have a nice (morning, afternoon, evening)