

Supporting Statement
Approval Request to Conduct Customer Satisfaction Research
(OMB #1545-1432)
FY 2023 TAS Digital Customer Satisfaction Pilot 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.¹

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.”²

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 results.

It is through this process the Taxpayer Advocate Service establishes and maintains 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 identify the underlying causes of customer dissatisfaction in different types of case work and provide the basis for implementing appropriate organizational changes. TAS works cases for upwards of 220,000 taxpayers per year; obtaining customer feedback about the timeliness and quality of TAS’s services from a sample of this group may help TAS improve its operations.

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

² Reference: https://www.irs.gov/irb/2005-45_IRB#d0e95

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.

This survey will provide an online option in addition to a paper survey for randomly selected participants to complete the TAS Survey Questionnaire. TAS will use Qualtrics software and a URL to conduct the online survey, which participants can access by a smart phone or computer using a QR code or entering the URL address in a web browser.

3. Consideration Given to Information Technology

The survey will provide an option to take the TAS Customer Satisfaction survey online besides using the paper option. This includes use of a QR code and a URL address to link to an internet survey.

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 businesses 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 between three percent to four percent of the total population available to sample. Additionally, this survey is voluntary; therefore, entities may choose not to 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 help TAS 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

Respondents' 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 representative 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 identifying information of the respondent but will be assigned a unique random number which cannot 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 online and written survey. Based on a sample of 60,000 potential respondents and a projected response rate of 20 percent, we expect to receive approximately 12,000 respondents with 48,000 non-participants. The contact time for non-respondents is based on one minute to read the pre-notification letter resulting in 800 hours. These hours are computed as follows: $48,000 \times 1 \text{ minute} = 800 \text{ burden hours}$. For respondents, the time to complete the survey is ten minutes reflecting the time to read the pre-notification letter and complete the survey. The total hours for respondents are 2,000 hours computed by $12,000 \text{ respondents} \times 10 \text{ minutes}$. The total burden hours for the survey is $(800 + 2,000) = 2,800 \text{ hours}$.

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-respondent	48,000	1 minute or less	800
Expected respondent	12,000	10 minutes	2,000
Totals	60,000		2,800

13. Costs to Respondents

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

The total estimated annual cost burden to respondents is \$78,428 (Total burden hours above x hourly wage rate). The surveys take place across the United States with a cross-section of individuals. This estimate was created using the mean hourly wage for all occupations (\$28.01) from the BLS May 2021 National Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates - United States.

14. Costs to Federal Government

The anticipated cost to the Federal Government is approximately \$42,000. These costs are comprised of printing and material 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 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 TAS Business Assessment (BA). TAS Research and BA will prepare national customer satisfaction reports from the collected data.

17. Display of OMB Approval Date

TAS is seeking approval not to 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

April 2023 to December 2023

B. STATISTICAL METHODS

1. Universe and Respondent Selection

Survey participants will be extracted from a random sample of the population of closed cases for each month of the collection period.

2. Procedures for Collecting Information

TAS will administer the survey by mail monthly. Respondents will have the option to complete an online survey questionnaire using a QR code or by entering the URL and entering a unique password. Respondents will also have the option to complete a paper survey questionnaire and return it to TAS by a postage-paid envelope. The online responses will be combined from the results of the paper survey. The paper survey questionnaires will be scanned and tabulated using survey software. The results will be compiled by TAS Business Assessment and a national customer satisfaction report will be prepared.

3. Methods to Maximize Response

Standard procedures will be used to obtain the highest response rate possible for an online and mail survey which includes: 1) an initial postcard that contains the QR code and online survey URL to take the survey, 2) cover letters with questionnaires, and 3) a reminder postcard. Also, TAS will mail either an English or Spanish version of the survey questionnaire based on the language preference listed in the closed case record.

4. Testing of Procedures

The current questionnaire used for the regular TAS survey has been tested, and it has been used for five years in a paper format. If any changes are made, it is anticipated they will be minor.

5. Contacts for Statistical Aspects and Data Collection

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