

**SUPPORTING STATEMENT**  
**Approval Request to Conduct Customer Satisfaction Research**  
**W&I E-help Desk Focus Groups FY2018**

**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.

For the Wage and Investment Division, an important service delivery channel is the toll-free E-help Desk phone service. Information collected from the currently in field customer satisfaction survey and the proposed companion focus groups are used to provide meaningful feedback to managers and staff in the E-help Desk function at a national and site level. This survey will assist E-help Desk in assessing its overall customer satisfaction and overall quality for its balanced measures.

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

The E-help Desk IVR phone survey currently conducted by Pacific Consulting Group used to measure customer satisfaction has not been reviewed for several years. Three focus groups will be used to test potential changes to the survey. This research has two components. The first will utilize a screener to invite taxpayers who have participated in a prior E-help Desk survey to participate in a telephone focus group to provide feedback. The second component will be conducting the E-help Desk telephone focus groups with those taxpayers.

**3. Consideration Given to Information Technology**

E-help Desk Customers interact with the IRS via the phone. Given that already preset communication method, the vendor will conduct the focus groups over the phone. This will allow participants from multiple geographic locations to participate at one time and will limit the burden of travel to the participant.

**4. Efforts Not to Duplicate Research**

This is the only focus group study currently proposed for this customer group.

**5. Reducing the Burden on Small Entities**

No small entities are involved in this study.

**6. Consequences of Not Conducting Collection**

E-help Desk would be unable to meet corporate goals and would fall short of meeting the IRS Mission of a Balanced Measurement System. Failure to conduct this research would adversely affect our ability to compare our results and determine where customer satisfaction improvements are needed.

**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 SOI**

There were no consultations with persons outside of the Agency.

**9. Payment of Gift**

There will be an electronic gift card in the amount of \$75 given to each participant for completing the 60-minute Focus Group.

**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 protection of all taxpayers to the extent allowed by law. This includes criteria for disclosure—laid out in the Privacy 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 group recruitment lists will not contain tax return or taxpayer information beyond name and contact number. 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 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**

A total of 3 phone focus groups will be held. We will recruit 12 qualified individuals for each group for a total of 36 recruits, with the expectation that 8 will ultimately participate in each group for a total of 24 participants. Considering all factors (competing interests, willingness, and schedule), we expect about 20% of those invited to participate to agree to participate. Therefore, a total of 150 people will be invited to participate.

As shown in the table below, the contact time to invite and screen the 150 who are invited to participate is 5 minutes each for a total of 12.5 hours (150 invitations x 5 minutes/60). The time for reminder phone calls to the 36 recruits who agreed to participate is 5 minutes each for a total of 3 hours (36 recruits x 5 minutes/60). The time for participating in the groups is 60 minutes each for 24 participants for a total of 24 hour (24 participants x 60 minutes/60). **The total number of burden hours is 39.5.**

**BURDEN HOURS Estimate**

Category of Respondent	No. of Respondents	Participation Time	Burden
Screened Potential Participants	150	5 minutes	12.5 hours

Recruited Participants (subset of above)	36	5 minutes	3 hours
Focus Group Actual Participants (subset of above)	24	60 minutes	24 hours
<b>Total Burden Hour</b>			39.5 hours

**Estimated Response Rate: 20%**

**13. Costs to Respondents**

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

**14. Costs to Federal Government  
\$29,814.00**

**15. Reason for Change**

No change is being requested. Since this is the first focus group by this contractor.

**16. Tabulation of Results, Schedule, and Analysis Plans**

The vendor will use the results of the focus groups to outline key themes and areas of taxpayer interest, suggestions for improvement and proposed changes to the companion W&I E-help Desk phone IVR survey currently in field. Verbatim quotes from participants will be used to support all findings.

**17. Display of OMB Approval Date**

IRS is seeking approval to not display the expiration date for OMB approval.

**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**

The date of collection is to be conducted beginning September 15, 2018 and ending November 30, 2018 pending OMB approval.

**B. STATISTICAL METHODS**

However, the primary purpose of these collections will be for internal management purposes; there are no plans to publish or otherwise release this information.

**1. Universe and Respondent Selection**

The sampling frame consists of W&I E-help Desk taxpayers.

**2. Procedures for Collecting Information**

E-help Desk customers that have agreed to participate in future research via the companion IVR survey will be contacted to participate in the focus groups.

**3. Methods to Maximize Response**

The contractor will be recruiting from a list of people who said they were willing to participate in future research. The contractor will pay an incentive of \$75 to participants. Let the participant know that their

participation will help the IRS improve its services. The contractor will have 3 separate focus groups at different times on different days to allow people to participate when it is most convenient for them.

**4. Testing of Procedures**

The function and the contractor have worked together to refine the survey instrument over the years to ensure the right questions are being asked from the IRS' perspective and the taxpayer's perspective.

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

For questions regarding the study or questionnaire design or statistical methodology, contact:

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