

Date of Approval: 10/23/2024
Questionnaire Number: 1585

Basic Information/Executive Summary

What is the name of your project (system, database, pilot, product, survey, social media site, etc.)?

Taxpayer Communication Tool Ad Hoc Recurring Research

Business Unit

Office of Online Services

Preparer

For Official Use Only

Subject Matter Expert

For Official Use Only

Program Manager

For Official Use Only

Designated Executive Representative

For Official Use Only

Executive Sponsor

For Official Use Only

Executive Summary: Provide a clear and concise description of your project and how it will allow the IRS to achieve its mission.

This research initiative will be conducted as an ad hoc and recurring study over a three-year period, focusing on understanding and enhancing the communication tools provided by the IRS. The research is designed to generate insights and evaluate the effectiveness of these tools from the perspectives of taxpayers, tax professionals, and IRS employees. We aim to uncover the issues, challenges, and questions that prompt taxpayers to seek help from the IRS. This research will inform the design of communication tools that effectively address these needs. By exploring the experiences of taxpayers, tax professionals, and IRS employees, we will gain a comprehensive understanding of how they interact with existing IRS communication tools, such as chat and secure messaging. This research will help us identify strengths and areas for improvement. We will also identify best practices for communication tools by understanding the habits, beliefs, preferences, and pain points of users of non-IRS communication tools. This will guide the development of IRS tools that align with user expectations. Lastly, this research will involve evaluative studies to assess how well new or revised IRS

communication tools meet user needs, ensuring that the tools are user-centered and effective. Each study will focus on select pieces of the IRS communication experience and involve a small number of participants. For any external primary research, we anticipate leveraging vendor support for recruitment, while IRS staff will conduct the study sessions. For internal research, IRS teams will manage both recruitment and study sessions. During this research, we anticipate encountering standard personally identifiable information (PII) typical of remote interview studies. This includes participant names, physical markers, biometric data, IP addresses, and email addresses. Additionally, screening data such as age range, gender, tax-filing status, education level, and household income will be collected. However, we do not expect participants to disclose sensitive information such as specific tax or financial details. This ongoing research effort will be instrumental in shaping IRS communication tools that are intuitive, effective, and aligned with the needs of all users, ultimately enhancing the overall experience with IRS services.

Personally Identifiable Information (PII)

Will this project use, collect, receive, display, store, maintain, or disseminate any type of Sensitive but Unclassified (SBU), Personally Identifiable Information (PII), or Federal Tax Information (FTI)?

Yes

Please explain in detail how this project uses sensitive data from inception to destruction (data lifecycle).

PII is not collected during the user experience (UX) research study (i.e. ad hoc, iterative user feedback activities). PII data may be collected during recruitment. Data will be collected via IRS Microsoft Teams, IRS Microsoft Forms and secure email. When storing the data on our computers, we will encrypt the data and only store it in approved folders, making sure only those who are approved to have access can get to the data. It may also be stored in encrypted files on IRS UXD SharePoint. It will be viewed only by the Office of Online Service's Communication Tool project members, with a need to know. Transfer of data will be via secure email and secure server link. Notes and data collected during the UX research (i.e. ad hoc, iterative user feedback activities) will be anonymized and therefore will not include names of participants. Notes and data will only be viewed by researchers with a need to know. Transfer of data will be via secure email, and secure server link. All data collected from IRS Microsoft Teams, IRS Microsoft Forms and secure email and each instance of a UX research study (i.e. ad hoc, iterative user feedback activities) will be destroyed in accordance with IRS destruction guidelines and no later than 1 year after study completion. For Vendor recruitment, vendor PII Statement: Participant information is protected by the vendor's proprietary and fully secure database store in an encrypted format on their private servers.

Please select all types of Sensitive but Unclassified data (SBU)/Personally Identifiable Information (PII)/Federal Tax Information (FTI) that this project uses.

Biometric Information
Education Information
Email Address
Employment Information
Internet Protocol Address (IP Address)
Language
Name
Other
Telephone Numbers

Please explain the other type(s) of PII that this project uses.

Tax-Filing Status, Age, Gender, Household Income

Cite the authority for collecting SBU/PII/FTI (including SSN if relevant).

PII for federal tax administration - generally IRC Sections 6001 6011 or 6012

PII for personnel administration - 5 USC

Product Information (Questions)

1.1 Is this survey a result of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)?

Yes

1.12 What is the IRA Initiative Number?

1.2, 1.4, 1.6, 1.8, 1.10, 1.12

1.13 What is your research method(s) used (i.e., survey, telephone interview, focus group, etc.)?

Ad hoc, iterative user feedback activities i.e. User Testing (in person, remote moderated, remote unmoderated), Design Experiments, Interviews, Task Analysis, Focus Groups, Card Sorting, Tree Testing, Diary Studies, Field Studies, Ethnography, Contextual inquiry, Direct observation / site visit, Surveys, Eye Tracking, A/B Testing, Web analytics (heat map, scroll map, traffic analytics, etc.).

1.14 Is this a new survey, telephone interview, focus group, or usability testing?

Throughout the rest of this questionnaire, we will use the term "survey" to include all of these.

Yes

1.15 Is there a Privacy and Civil Liberties Impact Assessment (PCLIA) for this survey?

No

1.19 Which Business Unit (BU) is requesting this survey?

OLS

1.21 Who will the survey be administered to?

User feedback activities will be administered to taxpayers, tax professionals, and IRS employees.

1.22 Is this a reoccurring survey?

Yes

1.22 Will this survey be administered for one year with multiple events (1-year expiration)?

No

1.22 What is the start date?

10/10/2024

1.22 Will the survey be administered annually (3-year expiration)?

Yes

1.23 What is the end date?

10/10/2027

2.11 Will the survey capture any type of PII or is PII (names, addresses, email addresses, etc.) used to select participants?

Yes

2.12 If any PII data is collected, disclosed, or studied on individuals who choose not to participate, please describe the data.

Yes. Email addresses will be collected to invite participants who did not participate to future research sessions.

2.13 List any linkable data that the survey uses, collects, receives, displays, stores, maintains, or disseminates (gender, ethnicity, parts of address, tax filing information, etc.) or uses to select participants?

First and last name , Email, Phone Number, Age, Gender, Education, Language proficiency, assistive technologies used, need for ASL interpreter, etc., employment status/type (PT/FT/Unemployed; federal/state/local govt, employment in tax services industry, self-employed, small business, military, non-profit, etc.), tax account information (filing status - S/MFJ/MFS/HH, number of dependents, withholding status - employer/estimated payments/pay at filing, filing habits - electronic/paper/self/pro, balance due - refund or pay, types of IRS forms filed - 1040/940/1065, types of letters/notices received - CP2000, etc.), use of bank or other types of financial institutions/services, technology

proficiency/comfort/access (internet use, device use, device type, email account, familiarity with web conferencing software, etc.), types of IRS interactions/services/touchpoints, Voice/audio recording (for post-collection analysis only).

2.14 Explain how the participants are selected. Include a detailed description. Please provide your research plan as supporting documentation.

To stay within the bounds of OMB/PRA requirements for collecting information and to ensure sufficient data to make meaningful conclusions, we will be conducting user ad hoc, iterative user feedback activities. When recruiting internally, our objective is to recruit participants through a combination of online and in-person methods while ensuring stringent data privacy and protection. Online recruitment will leverage social media platforms, potential email campaigns, website pop-ups (IRS.gov and Online Account), online forums, and surveys. In-person recruitment will focus on local events, public spaces, flyers, posters, and partnerships with local organizations. When BLN24 will recruit participants for user experience (UX) research they will use their internal database of volunteer participants. They will send an email to potential participants asking to take an online screener to determine their eligibility. The participants have self-registered with BLN24 to conduct their surveys. The participants have voluntarily accessed the vendor's website to self-register and in doing so have volunteered to be contacted by phone or email to be part of future market research studies. The BLN24 maintains a database for these potential participants. As part of the BLN24 contract, they will contact the third-party vendor who will then use the potential participants listing to contact possible participants by email. Within the email they are notified of an upcoming survey event, the dates and times are shared with the potential participants. The participants are asked to indicate if they can participate in a screener survey (also referred to as a qualifying questionnaire). The selection for this study is based on certain criteria, the participants responses to a screener questionnaire and their availability to participate. The recruitment vendor will maintain the participant's privacy by keeping their data in a secure database stored in an encrypted format on their private server. Upon study completion, any recruitment data will be destroyed within 1 year.

2.15 How are the participants notified (letter, postcard, email, etc.) of the survey, and if the survey is voluntary/optional, how is notice given? If it is not voluntary, please explain why it is mandatory.

Email, in-person, letter, phone.

3.11 What tool(s) is/are used to conduct the survey? Please indicate if the anonymous feature has been set for the survey, if applicable.

Microsoft Teams - anonymous feature; Microsoft Survey - anonymous feature; Medallia - anonymous feature; Microsoft Outlook Whiteboard - Microsoft Office Suite; Qualtrics.

3.12 Will the survey be audio-recorded or video-recorded?

Yes

3.13 Provide the consent method and statement.

Consent will be asked for during the introduction of the session: "We would like to record this interview. The recording is for research purposes only and your name will not be associated directly with the content in the recording. Recordings will be kept in a secure location and shared only with persons with a valid need to know. Do you consent to the use of the recording by the IRS?"

4.11 Does this survey retrieve information by any personal identifier for an individual who is a U.S. citizen, or an alien lawfully admitted for permanent residence? If the answer is Yes, you must have at least one SORN name and number selected in the SORNs section.

Yes

4.12 The Privacy Act of 1974 (5 USC § 552a(e)(3)) requires each agency that maintains a system of records to inform each individual requested to supply information about themselves. Do survey participants provide information about themselves?

Yes

4.13 Please provide the Privacy Act Statement.

Privacy Act Statement: The authority requesting this information is 5 USC 301. The primary purpose of asking for the information is to determine steps the IRS can take to improve our services to you. The information may be disclosed as authorized by the routine uses published in the following Privacy Act System of Records: (1) IRS 00.001 Correspondence Files and Correspondence Control Files. Not answering some or all of the questions will not affect you.

4.14 Does the IRS administer (conduct) the survey?

Yes

4.15 Provide the name of the IRS office administering the survey.

OLS

4.18 Does the IRS perform analysis of the survey results?

Yes

4.19 Provide the name of the IRS office performing the analysis of the survey.

OLS

4.21 If a contractor administers (conducts) and analyzes the survey, is all work performed and contained in the United States?

Yes

4.22 How does the administrator of the survey protect employees' or taxpayers' SBU/PII from compromise, loss, theft, or disclosure?

The vendor will not provide any PII gathered in recruitment or during the testing sessions to IRS. Their PII will not be stored on IRS computers. The recruitment vendor will maintain the participant's privacy by keeping their data in a secure database stored in an encrypted format on their private server. Upon study completion, any recruitment data will be destroyed within 1 year. For in-person research in which PII is collected in the recruitment process, the research team will ask verbal screening questions for the purposes of determining study eligibility. If eligible for the study, the participant will receive an appointment card for the research session inviting them to voluntarily attend the session. Participant's answers to screening questions will not be retained. No PII will be stored in any format. For internal IRS employee research, Campus Managers may collect PII such as name, e-mail address, and employment information during the recruitment handling and participant outreach and scheduling. This data will be stored and collected via IRS outlook secure email. PII will not be used to identify the participants in the research report or findings.

4.23 Where and how is the PII stored and protected?

The vendor will not provide any PII gathered in recruitment or during the testing sessions to IRS. Their PII will not be stored on IRS computers. The recruitment vendor will maintain the participant's privacy by keeping their data in a secure database stored in an encrypted format on their private server. Upon study completion, any recruitment data will be destroyed within 1 year. For in-person research in which PII is collected in the recruitment process, the research team will ask verbal screening questions for the purposes of determining study eligibility. If eligible for the study, the participant will receive an appointment card for the research session inviting them to voluntarily attend the session. Participant's answers to screening questions will not be retained. No PII will be stored in any format. For internal IRS employee research, Campus Managers may collect PII such as name, e-mail address, and employment information during the recruitment handling and participant outreach and scheduling. This data will be stored and collected via IRS outlook secure email. PII will not be used to identify the participants in the research report or findings.

4.24 Provide the Cyber Security approved security and encryption used when data is transferred electronically from the IRS to contractors and back to the IRS.

No PII is transferred to contractors and contractors will not transfer PII to the IRS. PII is only collected for recruitment screening purposes and will not transfer between the IRS and contractors.

4.25 How is the survey PII protected and stored when it is housed at a contractor site on contractor computers? Provide a detailed explanation of the physical and electronic security and protection of the data before, during and after the survey.

The vendor will not provide any PII gathered in recruitment or during the testing sessions to IRS. Their PII will not be stored on IRS computers. The recruitment vendor will maintain the participant's privacy by keeping their data in a secure database stored in an encrypted format on their private server. Upon study completion, any recruitment data will be destroyed within 1 year. For in-person research in which PII is collected in the recruitment process, the research team will ask verbal screening questions for the purposes of determining study eligibility. If eligible for the study, the participant will receive an appointment card for the research session inviting them to voluntarily attend the session. Participant's answers to screening questions will not be retained. No PII will be stored in any format. For internal IRS employee research, Campus Managers may collect PII such as name, e-mail address, and employment information during the recruitment handling and participant outreach and scheduling. This data will be stored and collected via IRS outlook secure email. PII will not be used to identify the participants in the research report or findings.

4.26 Has a Contracting Officer or Contracting Officer's Representative (COR) verified the contract included privacy and security clauses for data protection and that all contractors have signed non-disclosure agreements which are on file with the COR?

Yes

4.27 Identify the roles and their access level to the PII data.

IRS UX Researchers: Read-Write Access to secure server where PII is stored

Usability Session Notetaker - No access to PII

Observers - No access to PII

Designers - No access to PII

Stakeholders - No Access to PII

BLN24 will not provide any PII gathered in recruitment or during the testing sessions to IRS. Their PII will not be stored on IRS computers.

4.275 Identify the roles and their access level to the PII data and indicate whether their background investigation is complete or not.

The research vendor (BLN24) will review the de-identified screening data collected by the recruitment vendor (FieldGoals) to ensure an appropriate mix of participants. Generally, the recruitment vendor does not share any PII with the research vendor. If any PII is shared (i.e., phone number, email), it will be provided in a password-protected document which will only be accessed by IRS-cleared research vendor staff directly affiliated with this research effort. If provided, the information will only be stored in a secure SharePoint site limited to IRS-cleared project members. During recruiting/scheduling, the recruitment vendor will maintain participant privacy by keeping data in a secure database stored in an encrypted format on their private server. They will only share the

participant's first name and last initial with the research vendor. Upon study completion, any recruitment data will be destroyed within 1 year.

4.28 Explain the precautions taken to ensure the survey results will not be used for any other purpose not listed in the Detailed Business Purpose and Need section and to ensure that employees or taxpayers who participate in the survey cannot be identified or re-identified under any circumstances and no adverse actions taken.

Raw data of emails collected from interested participants will be stored in secure IRS SharePoint, and only OLS Communication Tools team members who administer the ad hoc, iterative user feedback activities with a need to know will have access. No video, audio, or notes taken will include names. Only OLS Communication Tool researchers will have access to the video, audio and notes. Findings from ad hoc, iterative user feedback activities will be aggregated with no names attached to any feedback in final reports.

4.29 Does the administrator of the survey have access to information identifying participants?

Yes

5.11 For employee or taxpayer satisfaction surveys explain how you have ensured that no "raw" or unaggregated employee or taxpayer data will be provided to any IRS office.

In reporting to IRS offices, researchers will not connect information collected with employee names or email addresses. Final reports will contain only aggregated employee feedback and will contain no names or emails.

5.13 Does the individual about whom the information was collected or maintained expressly authorize its collection/maintenance?

Yes

Interfaces

Interface Type

IRS or Treasury Contractor

Agency Name

BLN24

Incoming/Outgoing

Incoming (Receiving)

Transfer Method

Secure email/Zixmail

Interface Type

IRS Systems, file, or database

Agency Name

Limited Access SharePoint

Incoming/Outgoing

Outgoing (Sending)

Transfer Method

Other

Other Transfer Method

Secure SharePoint

Systems of Records Notices (SORNs)

SORN Number & Name

IRS 10.004 - Stakeholder Relationship Management and Subject Files

Describe the IRS use and relevance of this SORN.

Manage stakeholder relations

Records Retention

What is the Record Schedule System?

General Record Schedule (GRS)

What is the retention series title?

6.5 - Public Customer Service Records

What is the GRS/RCS Item Number?

10

What type of Records is this for?

Electronic

Please provide a brief description of the chosen GRS or RCS item.

Public Service Operations Records

What is the disposition schedule?

Destroy 1 year after resolved or when no longer needed for business use, whichever is appropriate.

Data Locations

What type of site is this?

SharePoint Online (SPO) Collection

What is the name of the SharePoint Online (SPO) Collection?

UXD Home

What is the sensitivity of the SharePoint Online (SPO) Collection?

Personally Identifiable Information (PII) including Linkable Data

What is the URL of the item, if applicable?

<https://irsgov.sharepoint.com/:f:/r/sites/IECATRQB/Documents/Communications/Comms%20Research%20Participant%20Bank?csf=1&web=1&e=uOTZcY>

Please provide a brief description of the SharePoint Online (SPO) Collection.

UXD Home is a secure SharePoint Collection used by User Experience Services to store documentation.

What are the incoming connections to this SharePoint Online (SPO) Collection?

IRS Systems, files or database. Raw data of emails collected from interested participants will be stored in secure IRS SharePoint.