



Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration Office of Audit

PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE, BUT ADDITIONAL IMPROVEMENTS TO THE E-HELP DESK ARE NEEDED TO SUPPORT EXPANDING ELECTRONIC PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

Issued on July 28, 2011

Highlights

Highlights of Report Number: 2011-40-073 to the Internal Revenue Service Commissioner for the Wage and Investment Division.

IMPACT ON TAXPAYERS

Customers who contact the e-help Desk may be experiencing difficulty registering for e-Services, transmitting an electronically filed tax return, or applying to be an Electronic Return Originator. Electronic products supported by the e-help Desk include electronically filed tax returns and e-Services such as the Electronic Federal Tax Payment System and the Central Contractor Registration. Progress has been made, but additional improvements to the e-help Desk are needed to support expanding electronic products and services. Improvements needed relate to the protection of taxpayer data, the process of assessing customer satisfaction, and other enhancements that can increase productivity and reduce customer burden.

WHY TIGTA DID THE AUDIT

This audit was a follow-up to a prior TIGTA review to determine whether the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) e-help Desk Program is providing quality customer service.

WHAT TIGTA FOUND

The IRS continues to recognize the need to provide assistance to customers using e-Services. The IRS has addressed the concerns reported in Fiscal Year 2007 and has made improvements to the e-help Desk Program. Foremost was the establishment of the Electronic Products and Services Support organization.

Using an automated scheduling system could save resources and improve the Level of Service. Although the Level of Service is more than 80 percent, the scheduling process for the e-help Desk is labor intensive and inefficient. Other IRS telephone call sites use the E-Workforce Management (EWF) System to schedule assistors, which provides automated tools to forecast, schedule, and track call center workload and staffing requirements.

Email Address: TIGTACommunications@tigta.treas.gov

Web Site: <http://www.tigta.gov>

On October 1, 2007, a Customer Satisfaction Survey was implemented. However, the Survey results may not be reliable because the IRS cannot validate or verify the sample selection methodology and does not include all customers. In addition, assistors are often aware their calls have been selected for the Survey. Without reliable information, the IRS cannot provide a basis for comparing Program results with established performance goals.

In Fiscal Year 2010, there were 82,235 instances in which the assistors did not take the required steps to protect the confidentiality of the taxpayer information they disclosed. Managers are not holding employees accountable for not following required disclosure procedures.

A toll-free telephone line is not available for international calls to the e-help Desk. Furthermore, calls to the e-help Desk that are not serviceable by the e-help Desk are increasing, which burdens taxpayers and wastes resources.

WHAT TIGTA RECOMMENDED

TIGTA recommended that the Commissioner, Wage and Investment Division, ensure: 1) funding for the implementation of the EWF System is considered in the annual budget process; 2) managers consistently and effectively complete required reviews; 3) assistors use the Authentication and Authorization Job Aid; 4) upgrades are used to improve the Survey; 5) all calls are included in the population to be sampled for the Survey; 6) consideration is given to fund toll-free service to international callers; and 7) a study is completed to determine why the e-help Desk receives misdirected calls.

In the response to the report, the IRS agreed with our recommendations and plans to: 1) upgrade the EWF System in July 2011; 2) issue procedures to ensure management evaluates all employees consistently and effectively; 3) make the Authentication and Authorization Job Aid mandatory; 4) initiate efforts to improve Survey delivery; 5) hire an additional analyst in the unlikely event that the Survey cannot be partially automated; 6) consider initiating a toll-free project when funding becomes available; and 7) conduct a study to determine the reasons for the high volume of misdirected calls.

READ THE FULL REPORT

To view the report, including the scope, methodology, and full IRS response, go to:

<http://www.treas.gov/tigta/auditreports/2011reports/201140073fr.pdf>

Phone Number: 202-622-6500