

TREASURY INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR TAX ADMINISTRATION



The Customer Callback System Benefits Taxpayers; However, Performance Measures Are Not Comprehensive and More Callers Could Qualify for Callback Offers

July 21, 2023

Report Number: 2023-10-046

HIGHLIGHTS: The Customer Callback System Benefits Taxpayers; However, Performance Measures Are Not Comprehensive and More Callers Could Qualify for Callback Offers

Final Audit Report issued on July 21, 2023

Report Number 2023-10-046

Why TIGTA Did This Audit

To improve the taxpayer experience by reducing the amount of time spent waiting to speak with a customer service representative, the IRS developed the Customer Callback (CCB) system. The CCB system allows taxpayers to provide their telephone number and opt for an IRS employee to call them back rather than continuing to wait on hold.

Callbacks were offered to taxpayers on a limited basis beginning in Fiscal Year 2019. As of January 2023, the IRS has expanded this functionality to 43 telephone services. This audit was initiated to assess the IRS's implementation of the CCB system.

Impact on Tax Administration

Telephone customer service is critical in accomplishing the IRS's mission to help America's taxpayers understand and meet their tax responsibilities. The IRS's customer service strategy should include best practices similar to those provided by private industry, including telephone callback services.

What TIGTA Found

For Fiscal Year 2022, the IRS reported it offered callbacks to approximately 11 million callers and saved callers 3.6 million hours of hold time. The IRS's long-term strategy is to continue expanding the callback capability to nearly all of its viable telephone services. In January 2023, the IRS updated the CCB system to include better estimates of wait times. The CCB system was designed to reduce the time callers spent waiting on hold, not to increase the number of calls answered.

TIGTA identified two ways the IRS could enhance the reporting of CCB system results to improve clarity and transparency. First, revise external performance measures to be more comprehensive. This would reduce inconsistency in the performance measures and allow stakeholders to better understand how many callers were offered a callback. For example, stakeholders may be interested to know that in Fiscal Year 2022, only approximately 11 percent of callers seeking live assistance were offered callbacks.

Second, establish goals for CCB system performance measures. Goals help measure how organizations perform. Without goals, the performance measures do not provide a full perspective about progress and improvements in the CCB system.

In addition, callers with estimated wait times longer than 60 minutes are not eligible for callback consideration and must instead continue waiting on hold. Eliminating this restriction would improve service to callers who may have the greatest need for it because their wait time is the longest. IRS management stated that this restriction was established during the pilot program. IRS management is considering removing this ineligibility rule; however, as of May 2023, the restriction still remains.

What TIGTA Recommended

TIGTA recommended that the Commissioner, Wage and Investment Division, 1) revise external performance measures to provide a more meaningful assessment of CCB system performance and its assistance provided to taxpayers; 2) develop baseline goals for CCB system performance measures and adjust them periodically as needed; and 3) eliminate the 60-minute estimated wait time threshold when offering callers the option to receive a callback.

In their response to the report, the IRS agreed with two of the recommendations and plans to take corrective actions. However, the IRS did not agree to establish baseline goals for CCB performance because IRS management believes that it is not viable to establish program goals for a customer experience tool when use of the tool is reduced due to positive business changes. TIGTA believes that services designed to mitigate customer burden are not excepted from establishing goals.



TREASURY INSPECTOR GENERAL
FOR TAX ADMINISTRATION

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20024

July 21, 2023

MEMORANDUM FOR: COMMISSIONER OF INTERNAL REVENUE

FROM: *Heather Hill*
Heather M. Hill
Deputy Inspector General for Audit

SUBJECT: Final Audit Report – The Customer Callback System Benefits Taxpayers;
However, Performance Measures Are Not Comprehensive and More
Callers Could Qualify for Callback Offers (Audit # 202210032)

This report presents the results of our review to assess the Internal Revenue Service's implementation of the Customer Callback system. This review is part of our Fiscal Year 2023 Annual Audit Plan and addresses the major management and performance challenges of *Modernizing IRS Operations* and *Improving Taxpayer Service*.

Management's complete response to the draft report is included as Appendix III. If you have any questions, please contact me or Bryce Kisler, Assistant Inspector General for Audit (Management Services and Exempt Organizations).

Table of Contents

Background	Page 1
Results of Review	Page 4
<u>Performance Measures Are Not Comprehensive Enough to Assess Callback Service to Taxpayers</u>	Page 4
<u>Recommendation 1</u> :.....	Page 6
<u>Customer Callback Performance Goals Have Not Been Developed</u>	Page 6
<u>Recommendation 2</u> :.....	Page 7
<u>Taxpayers With the Longest Estimated Wait Times Are Not Eligible for Callbacks</u>	Page 7
<u>Recommendation 3</u> :.....	Page 8
Appendices	
<u>Appendix I – Detailed Objective, Scope, and Methodology</u>	Page 9
<u>Appendix II – Customer Callback Expansion Timeline</u>	Page 11
<u>Appendix III – Management’s Response to the Draft Report</u>	Page 13
<u>Appendix IV – Abbreviations</u>	Page 17

Background

Taxpayers rely on the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to provide answers to tax related questions as they attempt to voluntarily comply with the nation's tax laws. The IRS maintains a telephone service for taxpayers to speak directly with customer service representatives (CSR). However, over the past several years, the IRS has faced increased call volumes and limited CSR availability, resulting in longer wait times and disconnected calls. To improve the taxpayer experience by reducing the amount of time spent waiting on the telephone to speak with a CSR, the IRS developed the Customer Callback (CCB) system.

The CCB system supports the IRS's customer service strategy of offering services available in private industry by allowing taxpayers the option to provide their telephone number and receive a callback rather than continuing to wait on hold. The IRS estimated that an accepted callback saved taxpayers an average of 34 minutes of hold time in Fiscal Year (FY) 2022. While the CCB system can assist in improving the taxpayer experience by reducing the amount of time spent waiting on hold to speak with a CSR, it was not designed to increase the number of calls answered.

The Information Technology organization's Contact Center Support Division, in cooperation with a contracted telephone service provider, manages the CCB system, which was deployed in FY 2019. The Wage and Investment Division's Joint Operations Center (JOC), which is within the Customer Account Services function, jointly maintains the callback operations with the Contact Center Support Division. Additionally, IRS business unit executives, such as the Director, Accounts Management, and the Director, Collection, collaborate with the JOC for callback decisions and modifications.

Beginning in FY 2019, the IRS started a pilot program that offered a single telephone service configured with the callback feature.¹ In FY 2020, the IRS expanded callbacks to five telephone services.² This was further expanded to 16 telephone services in FY 2021, 31 telephone services in FY 2022, and 43 telephone services by January 2023.³ Figure 1 shows the five telephone services with callback capability that had the highest demand during FY 2022. These five telephone services represented approximately 54 percent of the demand for live assistance.

¹ The IRS refers to these toll-free telephone services as "applications," and the pilot program as the "bridge solution."

² The initial telephone service configured with the callback feature in FY 2019 was Balance Due (Individual), followed by Employer Identification Number, Accounts (Business), Balance Due Agreed (Individual), and Automated Underreporter Small Business in FY 2020.

³ The 43 telephone services are distributed amongst 22 unique toll-free numbers. See Appendix II for a timeline of the expansion of the callback capability to the various telephone services.

Figure 1: FY 2022 Highest Demand Services



Source: The JOC.

The pilot program ended in January 2023 when the IRS transitioned to its permanent CCB system that included better estimates of wait times.⁴ The IRS plans to expand callback capability to 116 telephone services by August 2023. This would collectively represent 95 percent of callers seeking live assistance deemed viable for a callback.⁵ Figure 2 shows the factors that IRS management uses to prioritize the expansion of the CCB system to additional telephone services.

Figure 2: Callback Expansion Priorities



Source: The JOC.

During FY 2022, the IRS received approximately 173 million attempted calls to its telephone network. Of these, approximately 109 million callers sought live assistance from a CSR. The IRS refers to the total number of callers seeking live assistance as “assistor demand.” To calculate assistor demand, the IRS counts all answered calls, secondary hang-ups, and disconnects.⁶

If a CSR is not available to assist a caller, the IRS may consider whether the call meets the criteria to offer a callback. The IRS refers to these calls as “Calls Queued for Callback Consideration.” However, not all calls are considered for callbacks. For example, in FY 2022, approximately 26 million (24 percent) of the approximately 109 million callers seeking live assistance were

⁴ The IRS refers to the permanent CCB system as the “enterprise solution.”

⁵ Viability includes only call demand targeted for live assistance and generally excludes automated services.

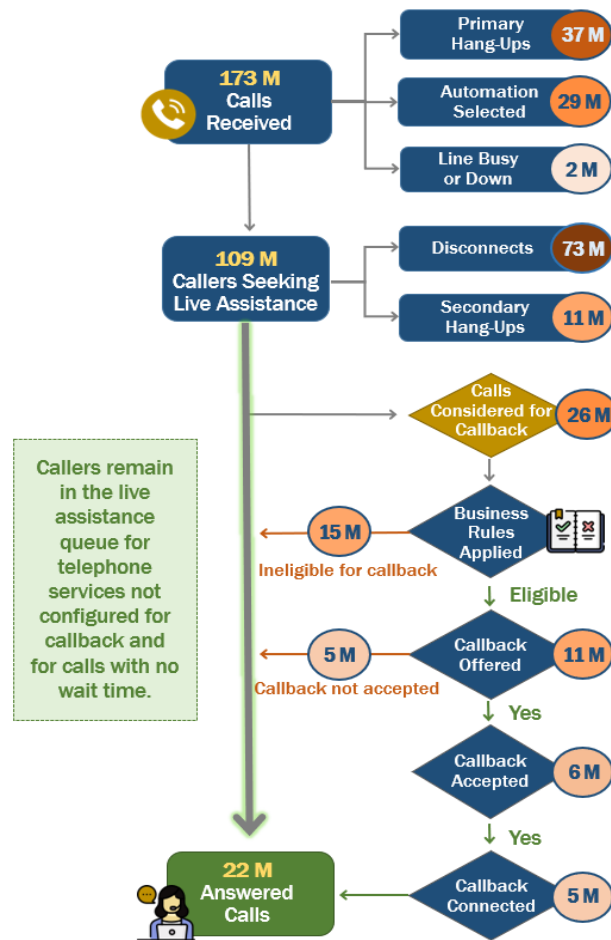
⁶ Secondary hang-ups occur when the taxpayer hangs up after the call is routed to a CSR for live assistance.

The Customer Callback System Benefits Taxpayers; However, Performance Measures Are Not Comprehensive and More Callers Could Qualify for Callback Offers

queued for callback consideration. Most of the other calls were disconnected before they could enter the queue because the IRS did not have enough CSRs to answer the calls. These disconnects are the IRS's standard practice when call demand exceeds the resources available to handle the demand. Prior to being disconnected, callers are informed of the IRS's inability to provide service.

The IRS's ability to manage telephone demand is limited by the number of CSRs available to answer the calls. Disconnect determinations occur in real-time and are driven by the nature of the call demand. For example, disconnects can be limited to specific service lines. Figure 3 shows an overview of the IRS telephone system call volumes during FY 2022.⁷

Figure 3: Telephone Call Flow Diagram (Numbers Are in Millions)⁸



Source: Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration analysis of the call volumes of the IRS telephone system for FY 2022.

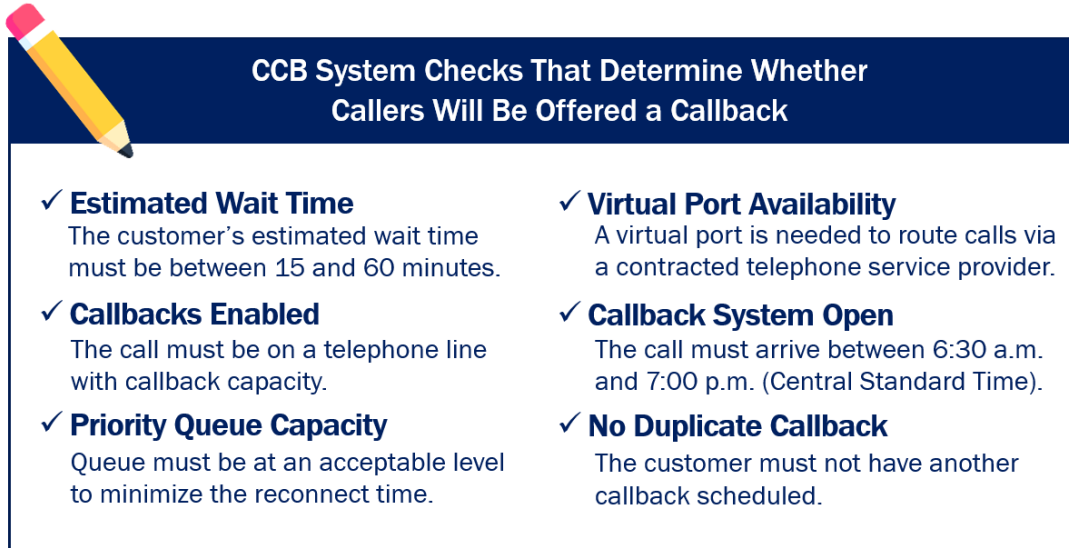
⁷ "Callers Seeking Live Assistance" includes all IRS services, while "Calls Considered for Callback" includes only services configured for callbacks.

⁸ Figures in the graphic will not reconcile exactly, as it is possible for a caller to be counted more than once if the caller is transferred to multiple services during a single call. Call volume is tracked in the Enterprise Telephone Database, which captures all toll-free telephone data and produces reports, and a commercial software is used to provide real-time and historical reports on customer and agent behavior including trend analysis and call routing.

The Customer Callback System Benefits Taxpayers; However, Performance Measures Are Not Comprehensive and More Callers Could Qualify for Callback Offers

Once a call is queued for callback consideration, it must meet specific criteria to receive a callback offer. Figure 4 shows these criteria, known as business rules, which are used to determine whether a call will be considered for a callback.

Figure 4: CCB System Business Rules



CCB System Checks That Determine Whether Callers Will Be Offered a Callback	
✓ Estimated Wait Time The customer's estimated wait time must be between 15 and 60 minutes.	✓ Virtual Port Availability A virtual port is needed to route calls via a contracted telephone service provider.
✓ Callbacks Enabled The call must be on a telephone line with callback capacity.	✓ Callback System Open The call must arrive between 6:30 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. (Central Standard Time).
✓ Priority Queue Capacity Queue must be at an acceptable level to minimize the reconnect time.	✓ No Duplicate Callback The customer must not have another callback scheduled.

Source: The JOC.

For FY 2022, of the approximately 26 million calls initially considered for a callback, over 11 million calls met the business rules and were offered a callback. Customers who are offered a callback have the option to accept it or to continue waiting on hold for a CSR. The IRS reported that taxpayers who accepted callback offers saved an estimated 3.6 million hours of hold time during FY 2022.

Results of Review

Performance Measures Are Not Comprehensive Enough to Assess Callback Service to Taxpayers

It is difficult to determine the true success of the CCB system because some of its measures are lacking the clarity needed to adequately assess performance. As a result, outside stakeholders may not fully understand the limitations of the CCB system in improving the taxpayer experience. Figure 5 shows the measures developed by Wage and Investment Division management to evaluate the CCB system.

Figure 5: CCB System Performance Measures

Measure	Definition
Percentage of Callback Capability	Percentage of call demand on telephone systems configured for callbacks.
Count of Callbacks Offered	Number of callers offered a callback.
Percentage of Callbacks Accepted	Percentage of callers who accept the callback offer.
Percentage of Reconnections	Percentage of callers successfully reconnected via callback.
Taxpayer Hours Saved	The time taxpayers saved by not waiting on hold.

Source: Wage and Investment Division management.

The IRS created these interim performance measures during the pilot program to assess the success of the CCB system; however, the measures have not been formalized. The IRS has cited some of these measures in its public responses to questions raised by Congress. For example, in April 2022, the IRS Commissioner provided testimony to the House Oversight and Reform Committee, Subcommittee on Government Operations, stating that during FY 2022, the IRS had:

1. Expanded CCB system capability to approximately 70 percent of live assistance telephone demand.

While this measure is technically accurate, it measures only the system’s capability to offer a callback and does not measure callbacks actually offered.

2. Offered callback to more than 5.3 million taxpayers.

While this measure is technically accurate, it does not provide perspective by comparing it with the number of callers seeking live assistance. The percentage of taxpayers offered a callback would provide better context to understand how many callbacks were offered compared to how many calls were received.

3. Estimated that callbacks saved taxpayers more than 1.7 million hours.

While this measure is technically accurate, similar to the number of callbacks offered, it does not provide perspective by comparing it with, for example, the total time taxpayers spent waiting on hold or the average time saved per caller.

4. Calculated a callback acceptance rate exceeding 57 percent.

This measure is limited to the number of callbacks offered, which is significantly less than the total number of calls received seeking live assistance.

According to IRS procedures, performance measures reported by the IRS should provide accurate, complete, reliable, and comparable data for stakeholders.⁹ IRS management stated that they are evaluating the initial metrics to determine whether new metrics and goals will be developed for FY 2024. However, because these measures are still reported externally, the IRS should offer further clarification to help stakeholders fully understand CCB system performance. For example, unlike most of the other measures, the “Count of Callbacks Offered” is reported as

⁹ Internal Revenue Manual 1.5.1.10(4) (May 13, 2021).

The Customer Callback System Benefits Taxpayers; However, Performance Measures Are Not Comprehensive and More Callers Could Qualify for Callback Offers

the number of calls offered rather than a percentage of calls offered. In FY 2022, the IRS reported that more than 11 million callers were offered callbacks. However, without additional information, it is difficult for stakeholders to determine if the more than 11 million offers represent success or need improvement. Similarly, the “Taxpayer Hours Saved” measure is lacking perspective by not including a comparison to the total number of callers and the amount of time they were placed on hold.

Further, while the IRS currently calculates the percentage of calls offered callback as an internal measure, the IRS could potentially report this “Offer Rate Percentage” externally to improve insight to the taxpayer callback experience and provide clarifying information to stakeholders. However, the present internal calculation for “Offer Rate Percentage” excludes disconnected calls. Callers wishing to speak with a CSR but who are involuntarily disconnected should be included in the calculation of the percentage of callers offered a callback. The IRS’s reported “Offer Rate Percentage” metric for FY 2022 was approximately 43 percent; however, if the more than 73 million disconnected calls during the year were included in the calculation, the true rate would have been approximately 11 percent. Similarly, the true “Offer Rate Percentage” would have been approximately 9 percent for taxpayers who called the IRS’s main telephone number seeking live assistance with their individual income taxes instead of the 60 percent calculated by the IRS.

Recommendation 1: The Commissioner, Wage and Investment Division, should revise external performance measures to provide a more meaningful assessment of CCB system performance and its assistance provided to taxpayers.

Management’s Response: The IRS agreed with this recommendation and plans to implement new and/or revised CCB system performance measures by FY 2025.

Customer Callback Performance Goals Have Not Been Developed

Although the IRS has developed multiple callback measures, the IRS’s only performance goal for the CCB system is to expand callback capability to 116 telephone services by August 2023, which represents 95 percent of callers seeking live assistance.¹⁰ This goal is included in the *FY 2019 IRS Integrated Modernization Business Plan*. As of January 3, 2023, the IRS had enabled callback capability on 43 telephone services, which represents approximately 75 percent of callers seeking live assistance. While the expansion to 116 telephone services or 95 percent of viable taxpayer demand provides a goal for CCB system capability itself, it does little to reflect the taxpayer’s point of view. For example, data show that many callers are disconnected due to heavy call volume and are not offered a callback. According to IRS policies and procedures, if the goal of a program is to provide service to taxpayers, measures that tell how well the IRS served those taxpayers are most meaningful.

The IRS is required to set performance goals for organizational units and to measure the results achieved by those units. For example, the Government Accountability Office’s *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government* states that Government entities should use actual

¹⁰ Not all telephone services at the IRS have callback capability. Examples include international telephone services, callbacks that result in a charge to the IRS, and calls requiring interpreter services.

The Customer Callback System Benefits Taxpayers; However, Performance Measures Are Not Comprehensive and More Callers Could Qualify for Callback Offers

results against qualitative and numeric targets to report on agency progress in delivery of its administrative responsibilities.¹¹

IRS management stated that they have not established baseline goals for these measures because they were interim measures for use during the pilot program. However, goals are essential to performance measures because they:

- Provide direction to management and employees to guide program area improvements.
- Allow meaningful evaluation of program performance based on targets and goals.
- Facilitate accountability for program performance areas based on results.

Since the pilot program is now over, the IRS should start comparing actual results with established goals to report on agency progress in delivering its tax administration responsibilities. Goals also help measure how organizations perform relative to past performance. Without goals, the performance measures do not provide a full perspective about progress and improvements in the callback system.

Recommendation 2: The Commissioner, Wage and Investment Division, should develop baseline goals for CCB system performance measures and adjust them periodically as needed.

Management's Response: The IRS disagreed with this recommendation. Although management stated that they will monitor the overall health of the CCB program, their overall goal is to reduce the time taxpayers are on hold, which reduces the need for callbacks. IRS management stated it is not viable to establish program goals for a customer experience tool when the use of the tool is reduced due to positive business changes.

Office of Audit Comment: Program goals do not need to be dependent on how often a service is needed, but goals for taxpayer services should be associated with measures that tell how well the IRS served the taxpayers who did use them. For example, IRS management could set CCB program goals for customer satisfaction scores, or how often callbacks are made by the time promised to taxpayers. Neither the Internal Revenue Manual, nor the *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, provide exceptions for establishing program goals when services are designed to mitigate customer burden.

Taxpayers With the Longest Estimated Wait Times Are Not Eligible for Callbacks

Callers with estimated wait times longer than 60 minutes are currently not eligible for callback consideration and must instead continue waiting on hold. IRS management stated that the 60-minute wait time threshold was established during the pilot program to address stakeholder concerns that callers who attempt to reach a CSR on telephone lines not configured for callbacks may be unfairly disconnected. However, the 60-minute wait time threshold was not a

¹¹ Government Accountability Office, GAO-14-704G, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government* (Sept. 2014).

The Customer Callback System Benefits Taxpayers; However, Performance Measures Are Not Comprehensive and More Callers Could Qualify for Callback Offers

data-driven decision, rather it was simply a starting point for the pilot. Although the pilot program is over and the expansion of the CCB system continues, this restriction still remains as of May 2023, which places an unnecessary burden on callers with the longest wait times. IRS management stated they are still in the process of determining whether additional CCB system changes are warranted, including elimination of the 60-minute wait time threshold.

The IRS's mission includes providing top quality service, and its *Strategic Plan FY 2022-2026* includes the goal of providing quality and accessible services to enhance the taxpayer experience. Callers with estimated wait times greater than 60 minutes may have the greatest need for callbacks because their wait time is longest. For FY 2022, the IRS estimated that approximately 15 million taxpayers were not offered a callback because their estimated wait time was greater than 60 minutes.¹² Maintaining the 60-minute wait time threshold for callback consideration may not be consistent with the IRS's strategic goals or mission to provide quality service to all taxpayers.

Recommendation 3: The Commissioner, Wage and Investment Division, should eliminate the 60-minute wait time threshold when offering callers the option to receive a callback.

Management's Response: The IRS agreed with this recommendation and plans to eliminate the 60-minute threshold by December 2023.

¹² IRS management advised us that the actual number of taxpayers may be lower, but IRS system limitations prevented them from providing us a precise count.

Appendix I

Detailed Objective, Scope, and Methodology

The overall objective of this audit was to assess the IRS's implementation of the CCB system. To accomplish our objective, we:

- Determined if the CCB system is achieving its stated goals and objectives.
 - Obtained and reviewed IRS management procedures for operating the CCB system.
 - Evaluated the technical components of the CCB system.
 - Determined if the IRS is sufficiently addressing CCB system objectives.
- Evaluated the CCB system's expansion and prioritization of additional call lines.
 - Identified all IRS policies, timelines, and guidance concerning CCB system expansion.
 - Evaluated the methodology used to prioritize additional call lines.
- Determined whether IRS management has developed sufficient performance measures to evaluate the CCB system accurately.
 - Interviewed IRS managers and responsible personnel regarding CCB system measures, statistics, and benchmarks.
 - Identified and analyzed performance goals, measures, and targets developed to assess the CCB system.

Performance of This Review

This review was performed with information obtained from the JOC located in Atlanta, Georgia, and the Information Technology organization's Contact Center Support Division located in Chamblee, Georgia, during the period February 2022 through April 2023. We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective.

Major contributors to the report were Bryce Kisler, Assistant Inspector General for Audit (Management Services and Exempt Organizations); Carl Aley, Director; C. Morgan Little, Acting Audit Manager; Michael Russell, Lead Auditor; and Jeffrey Stieritz, Senior Auditor.

Validity and Reliability of Data From Computer-Based Systems

We performed tests to assess the reliability of all data obtained or provided from the Enterprise Telephone Database and a commercial software used to provide real-time and historical reports on customer and agent behavior including trend analysis and call routing. We evaluated the data by 1) reviewing existing information about the data and the system that produced them, and 2) interviewing agency officials knowledgeable about the data. We determined that the data were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of this report.

Internal Controls Methodology

Internal controls relate to management's plans, methods, and procedures used to meet their mission, goals, and objectives. Internal controls include the processes and procedures for planning, organizing, directing, and controlling program operations. They include the systems for measuring, reporting, and monitoring program performance. We determined that the following internal controls were relevant to our audit objective: the controls over the CCB system, implementation of the CCB system, and the expansion of the CCB system to the additional telephone services. We evaluated these controls by reviewing policies and procedures, interviewing employees and management, and analyzing data.

Appendix II

Customer Callback Expansion Timeline

FY Deployed	Telephone Service Provided
2019	Balance Due (Individual)
2020	Accounts (Business)
	Automated Underreporter Small Business
	Balance Due Agreed (Individual)
	Employer Identification Number
2021	Balance Due (Business)
	Balance Due (Individual Spanish)
	eHelp (Registration Services)
	Individual Income Tax Services (Spanish)
	Lien External
	Online Services Information Hotline
	Practitioner Priority Service (Business)
	Practitioner Priority Service (Individual)
	Taxpayer Assistance Center Appointment
	Taxpayer Protection Unit
2022	Wage and Investment Examination
	Automated Collection System Small Business (Business)
	Automated Collection System Small Business (Individual)
	Automated Substitute for Return Refund Hold
	eHelp (Application e-File)
	eHelp (Transcript Delivery System/Taxpayer Identification Number)
	Excise
	Identity Theft
	Income Tax Services (Individual)
	Information Returns Branch
	National Taxpayer Advocate
	Other (Business)
	Small Business Examination
	Tax Exempt and Government Entities (Employee Plan Notice)
Tax Exempt and Government Entities (Exempt Organization Notice)	
2023	Taxpayer Assistance Center Appointment (Spanish)
	Automated Collection Service Business Accounts (Spanish)
	eHelp: 94x e-File
	eHelp: 1120/990/1065 e-File
	eHelp: Individual e-File
	Federal Employee/Retiree Delinquency Initiative Filing Information Returns Electronically

The Customer Callback System Benefits Taxpayers; However, Performance Measures Are Not Comprehensive and More Callers Could Qualify for Callback Offers

FY Deployed	Telephone Service Provided
	Filing Information Returns Electronically Password Reset
	Individual Taxpayer Identification Number
	Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (Spanish)
	Identity Theft (Spanish)
	Math Error
	Taxpayer Protection Program (Spanish)

Source: The JOC and the IRS Servicewide Electronic Research Program as of January 2023.

Appendix III

Management's Response to the Draft Report



COMMISSIONER
WAGE AND INVESTMENT DIVISION

DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY
INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE
ATLANTA, GA 30308

July 3, 2023

MEMORANDUM FOR HEATHER M HILL
DEPUTY INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR AUDIT

FROM:

Kenneth C. Corbin 
Commissioner, Wage and Investment Division

Digitally signed by Kenneth C.
Corbin
Date: 2023.07.03 11:47:55 -0400

SUBJECT:

Draft Audit Report – The Customer Callback System Benefits Taxpayers; However, Performance Measures Are Not Comprehensive and More Callers Could Qualify for Callback Offers (202210032)

Thank you for the opportunity to review and provide comments on the subject draft report. The IRS continually explores ways to better assist taxpayers with their inquiries. Specific to live services, the IRS implemented Customer Callback (CCB) to improve the taxpayer experience by empowering callers waiting on hold for a customer service representative (CSR) the option of requesting a callback. The CCB is fully automated. Calls are evaluated against business rules, which happens immediately after the call is routed to the live assistance queue. Taxpayers who feel this is not convenient, have the option to continue holding. Industry standards and best practices were leveraged to optimize technology and taxpayer satisfaction.

The IRS piloted this technology in January 2019 on one toll-free application (telephone service) and incrementally expanded in subsequent years. As of January 2023, the IRS offers the option of callbacks on 43 toll-free applications. The IRS plans to expand callbacks on 116 toll-free applications by August 2023. Further enhancements to CCB will continue to be evaluated.

From January 2019 through September 2022, the IRS offered over 19.8 million callers the option of receiving a callback instead of waiting on hold. Of those offered, nearly 60 percent opted to use the service. The IRS calculated taxpayers saved nearly 6.5 million hours of hold time. The feedback received from taxpayer surveys, focus groups, and contact analytics on the pilot of the customer callback service was extremely positive and encouraging.

The Customer Callback System Benefits Taxpayers; However, Performance Measures Are Not Comprehensive and More Callers Could Qualify for Callback Offers

2

In January 2023, the IRS ended the pilot of the customer callback service and implemented the enterprise solution. Now that the permanent solution for offering taxpayers with a callback option has been deployed, we will review what additional metrics are available for inclusion and if any of the existing performance metrics should be revised or eliminated.

The IRS strives to achieve a high level of service and reduce the time taxpayers are on hold. If the IRS is successful in this goal, the need for callback is reduced. It is not viable to establish program goals for a customer experience tool when use of the tool is reduced due to positive business changes.

The IRS configured key criteria into the CCB system to ensure a positive experience for those using the service and ensure fairness to all callers. Callbacks are currently not offered to callers who have a wait time of sixty minutes or longer.

Our responses to your specific recommendations are enclosed. If you have any questions, please contact me, or a member of your staff may contact Dietra D. Grant, Director, Customer Account Services, at 470-639-3504.

Attachment

The Customer Callback System Benefits Taxpayers; However, Performance Measures Are Not Comprehensive and More Callers Could Qualify for Callback Offers

Attachment

Recommendations

The Commissioner, Wage and Investment Division, should:

RECOMMENDATION 1

The Commissioner, Wage and Investment Division, should revise external performance measures to provide a more meaningful assessment of CCB system performance and its assistance provided to taxpayers.

CORRECTIVE ACTION

The current performance measures were established to evaluate the performance of the interim solution for Customer Callback (CCB) and to identify additional desired features. Now that the permanent solution for offering taxpayers with a callback option has been deployed, we will review what additional metrics are available for inclusion and if any of the existing performance metrics should be revised or eliminated. We plan to implement new and/or revised performance measures for CCB to include better context by FY 2025.

IMPLEMENTATION DATE

October 15, 2024

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL

Director, Joint Operations Center, Customer Account Services, Wage and Investment Division

CORRECTIVE ACTION MONITORING PLAN

We will monitor this corrective action as part of our internal management control system.

RECOMMENDATION 2

The Commissioner, Wage and Investment Division, should develop baseline goals for CCB system performance measures and adjust them periodically as needed.

CORRECTIVE ACTION

The CCB is an optional service that is currently offered to callers when they are queued for an agent and their estimated wait time is between 15 and 60 minutes.

The IRS will continue to monitor the overall health of the program by reviewing the metrics to identify trends, system anomalies and configuration changes. In addition, the IRS monitors customer satisfaction with the callback process and identifies ways to improve the service through automated random customer satisfaction surveys, focus groups and contact analytics. The survey consists of six questions to measure the likelihood of a caller using the service again. Overall results indicate that most callers are satisfied with the service. Additionally, the IRS has conducted several focus groups with taxpayers who were offered the callback service. We will continue to evaluate that

The Customer Callback System Benefits Taxpayers; However, Performance Measures Are Not Comprehensive and More Callers Could Qualify for Callback Offers

2

feedback. The IRS also uses contact analytics to identify when a caller has mentioned customer callback.

IMPLEMENTATION DATE

N/A

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL

N/A

CORRECTIVE ACTION MONITORING PLAN

N/A

RECOMMENDATION 3

The Commissioner, Wage and Investment Division, should eliminate the 60-minute wait time threshold when offering callers the option to receive a callback.

CORRECTIVE ACTION

The 60-minute wait time threshold was established during the Customer Callback pilot due to platform limitations and potential negative impact to callers in the regular queue who did not use the callback service. The IRS deployed the Enterprise Solution in January 2023 configuring the potential for the callback option to 75 percent of callers seeking live assistance. We are expanding the Enterprise Solution by August 2023 to reach 95 percent of callers seeking live assistance. While we strive to provide as many callers as possible with live assistance, we are working toward eliminating the 60-minute threshold.

IMPLEMENTATION DATE

December 15, 2023

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL

Director, Joint Operations Center, Customer Account Services, Wage and Investment Division

CORRECTIVE ACTION MONITORING PLAN

We will monitor this corrective action as part of our internal management control system.

Appendix IV

Abbreviations

CCB	Customer Callback
CSR	Customer Service Representative
FY	Fiscal Year
IRS	Internal Revenue Service
JOC	Joint Operations Center



**To report fraud, waste, or abuse,
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