TREASURY INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR TAX ADMINISTRATION

*Improvements to the E-Help Desk Are
Needed to Support Expanding
Electronic Products and Services*

January 30, 2007

Reference Number: 2007-40-026

DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20220

**TREASURY INSPECTOR GENERAL
FOR TAX ADMINISTRATION**

January 30, 2007

MEMORANDUM FOR COMMISSIONER, WAGE AND INVESTMENT DIVISION

FROM: Michael R. Phillips
Deputy Inspector General for Audit

SUBJECT: Final Audit Report – Improvements to the E-Help Desk Are Needed to Support Expanding Electronic Products and Services
(Audit # 200640032)

This report presents the results of our review to determine whether the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) E-Help Desk Program is providing quality customer service.

Impact on the Taxpayer

The E-Help Desk Program provides assistance to users of IRS electronic products and services (e-services). Improvements to the E-Help Desk Program are needed to support the IRS' expanding e-services. Ensuring the Program provides quality customer service is essential because the number of taxpayers who are electronically filing their tax returns is increasing, and the IRS is continuing to offer more e-services.

Synopsis

The IRS recognizes the need to provide customers of its e-services with the ability to obtain the assistance they may need to successfully use these products. Since the inception of the E-Help Desk in 2002, the IRS has continued to identify ways to improve Program efficiency and customer service. However, continued expansion in the availability and use of e-services requires that improvements are made

> *Improvements are needed to ensure the E-Help Desk Program provides effective customer service.*

to ensure the Program can continue to provide effective customer service. We have the following concerns about the Program:

- Customer satisfaction is not being measured.

- Quality measures and procedures have not been fully established and developed. The Program has no measure to evaluate the accuracy of the responses the E-Help Desk assistors are providing to their customers.

- Call monitoring and electronic case (e-case[1]) reviews are currently not being used to evaluate the quality of the Program. Review of a random sample of 97 e-cases found 4 e-cases (4 percent) in which the customers received incorrect answers (i.e., the solutions did not address the customer questions). For 7 e-cases (7 percent), the assistors did not adequately document the e-cases, and we were unable to determine if customers received the correct answers.

- Processes and procedures have not been developed to ensure predefined solutions[2] are accurate and current or to ensure management information is accurate and reliable. Information contained in the E-Help Support System[3] is inaccurate and incomplete. The indicator used to show that an e-case was closed on the first contact was sometimes inaccurate. Assistors are not creating or updating e-cases for all calls. In addition, Business Strategy and Business Architect office management stated they do not review e-cases closed with general solutions to determine if new predefined solutions should be created to address the specific issues raised by customers.

- Processes have not been developed to ensure employees complete required training. Review of a random sample of 19 assistors determined that none had completed all required training for Fiscal Year 2006.

To adequately support the growth of electronic filing and e-services, the IRS must ensure its E-Help Desk Program is operating efficiently and effectively and is meeting the needs of its customers and the IRS.

Recommendations

The Commissioner, Wage and Investment Division, should develop (1) a process to ensure customer satisfaction is timely measured; (2) quality measures as well as a process to assess progress towards achieving the measures; (3) processes and procedures to ensure predefined solutions are accurately developed, timely monitored, and appropriately approved; (4) processes and procedures to ensure management information is complete and accurate; and (5) a process to

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[1] E-Help Desk assistors enter information about the callers, the nature of the calls, and the resolutions into electronic cases called e-cases.

[2] To ensure the consistency of responses provided to customers, the E-Help Desk uses a set of predefined solutions for common problems.

[3] The E-Help Support System documents the history of customers' contacts with the E-Help Desk.

ensure assistors complete required training; and (6) should realign E-Help Desk Program assistors under the Business Strategy and Business Architect office.

Response

IRS management agreed with all of our recommendations. Management:

1) Is considering administering a customer satisfaction survey focused specifically on the E-Help Desk.

2) Is working to establish quality measures and procedures with plans to add the E-Help Desk Program to the Embedded Quality process and implement Contact Recording.

3) Has revised the solutions development process to require documentation of the source or origin of solutions, approval before a solution can be placed into production, and an annual review of solutions.

4) Will require weekly e-case reviews and develop programming to automatically uncheck the Resolved on First Contact field when an e-case is reopened.

5) Has developed a process to ensure assistors have completed required training.

6) Will realign E-Help Desk assistors with the office that establishes policies and procedures.

Management's complete response to the draft report is included as Appendix VII.

Please contact me at (202) 622-6510 if you have questions or Michael McKenney, Assistant Inspector General for Audit (Wage and Investment Income Programs), at (202) 622-5916.

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Abbreviations

BSBA	Business Strategy and Business Architect
e-case	Electronic case
e-file	Electronically file(d)
e-filing	Electronic filing
e-services	Electronic products and services
EFTPS	Electronic Federal Tax Payment System
EHSS	E-Help Support System
IRS	Internal Revenue Service
U.S.	United States

Background

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) provides multiple electronic products and services (e-services) to tax professionals and payers to allow them to conduct business with the IRS electronically.[1] In Fiscal Year 2006, this allowed over 74 million individual tax returns and over 8 million business tax returns to be electronically filed (*e-file*). In addition, over 48 million payments were made using the Electronic Federal Tax Payment System (EFTPS).[2] The EFTPS allows taxpayers and tax professionals to use the telephone, personal computer software, or the Internet to initiate tax payments.

> **E-services is a suite of web-based products that allows tax professionals and payers to conduct business with the IRS electronically. These services are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week from almost any computer with an Internet connection.**

In 2002, the IRS established the E-Help Desk Program to assist customers with electronic filing (*e-filing*) and e-services. There are four E-Help Desk sites located at the following IRS Submission Processing Sites: Andover, Massachusetts; Cincinnati, Ohio; Austin, Texas; and Ogden, Utah. E-Help Desk assistors generally answer the telephone calls from 7:30 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Callers can leave a message after business hours. In addition, customers can fax inquires and some customers have the ability to email inquiries. Figure 1 provides a 3-year trend for incoming calls by Submission Processing Site.[3]

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[1] E-services is not available to the general public. Only approved IRS business partners, such as electronic filing tax professionals and payers, are eligible to participate in e-services.

[2] As of August 31, 2006.

[3] Figure 1 includes only those inquiries that originated from an incoming call. These represent 99 percent of contacts to the E-Help Desk.

Figure 1: Incoming Calls by E-Help Desk Site

E-Help Desk Site	Fiscal Year 2004	Fiscal Year 2005	Fiscal Year 2006
Andover, Massachusetts	200,305	169,329	160,166
Cincinnati, Ohio	29,241	29,861	33,346
Austin, Texas	234,307	183,945	167,032
Ogden, Utah	35,845	56,982	64,466

Source: IRS Toll-Free Telephone Reports for Fiscal Years 2004, 2005, and 2006.[4]

Customers contacting the E-Help Desk may be experiencing difficulty registering for e-services, transmitting an *e-file* tax return, or applying to be an Electronic Return Originator. Customers of the Program include agents enrolled with the IRS to file tax returns and make payments, certified public accountants, and tax software developers with nonaccount-related questions and issues concerning electronic products. Appendix V provides a list of E-Help Desk customers. Electronic products supported by the E-Help Desk include *e-file* and e-services, such as the EFTPS and the Central Contractor Registration.[5]

> *Enrolled agents, certified public accountants, and tax software developers are customers who use the E-Help Desk.*

Appendix VI provides a breakdown of the specific electronic products supported within each of the four broad product categories.

To obtain assistance, customers within the United States or its Territories can call toll-free 1-866-255-0654 and international callers can call 1-512-416-7750. Customers are presented with a series of self-selection menus that direct them to one of the E-Help Desk sites for assistance. Calls are answered in the order in which they are received. After a caller reaches an assistor, certain verifications are made to ensure the individual seeking information is authorized to receive the information. The assistor then uses the E-Help Support System (EHSS) to resolve the customer's problem(s). It contains a "solutions" database that houses a set of predefined solutions for common problems. If one of the predefined solutions does not address the problem, the assistor can raise the issue to the E-Help Solutions Board,[6] which reviews the problem and determines whether a new solution should be developed.

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[4] IRS data included in Figures 1-5 are provided for perspective only and were not audited.

[5] Contractors doing business with the Federal Government are required to register their companies. The Central Contractor Registration is the means by which companies register.

[6] The E-Help Solutions Board establishes the procedures for submission and approval of solutions.

E-Help Desk assistors enter information about the caller, the nature of the call, and the resolution into an electronic case (e-case). Calls that cannot be answered on the first contact are left open and tracked in the computer system. The e-case serves as the official record of customer contact and includes information regarding customer type, product type, problem type, and e-case resolution (e.g., an identification number of the solution used to resolve the e-case). The data are used to provide formal tracking and reporting of all issues and call types in a common database. Management reviews system reports to determine types of problems and ways to improve service. The EHSS is used to standardize processes and procedures.

Oversight of the Program is the responsibility of the IRS Wage and Investment Division Customer Account Services function. Within the Customer Account Services function, the Director, Business Strategy and Business Architect (BSBA), is responsible for providing strategic planning, technical problem solving, and daily management oversight to the E-Help Desk call sites. The Customer Account Services Submission Processing function is responsible for the E-Help Desk assistors. The Wage and Investment Division Electronic Tax Administration office is responsible for all electronic mechanisms used by taxpayers, preparers, and practitioners to file tax returns; make payments; exchange correspondence; and retrieve forms, publications, and other information.

This review was performed at the BSBA office in Atlanta, Georgia, and at the E-Help Desk sites in Andover, Massachusetts; Cincinnati, Ohio; Austin, Texas; and Ogden, Utah, during the period May through October 2006. The audit was conducted in accordance with *Government Auditing Standards*. Detailed information on our audit objective, scope, and methodology is presented in Appendix I. Major contributors to the report are listed in Appendix II.

Results of Review

Improvements to the E-Help Desk Are Needed to Support Expanding Electronic Products and Services

The IRS recognizes the need to provide customers of its e-services with the ability to obtain the assistance they may need to successfully use these products. Since the inception of the E-Help Desk in 2002, the IRS has continued to identify ways to improve Program efficiency and customer service. For example, the IRS:

- Consolidated the six *e-file* Help Desk sites, which assisted callers with different products and activities and used different telephone numbers, into a single Program. The Program currently consists of four call sites and one centralized toll-free telephone number. Since the consolidation, emphasis has been placed on improving the telephone system, implementing tools to manage contacts, and providing multichannel capabilities (telephone, email, and fax).

- Implemented the EHSS, which is a tool used for customer interaction and tracking. The EHSS documents the history of customers' contacts with the E-Help Desk. Prior to the implementation of this System, the Program did not have a way to record, track, and identify problems and trends for *e-file* or e-service products.

- Obtained Next Available Technology, which seeks to improve the overall level of service by sending calls to the next available assistor, enterprise-wide, that has the necessary skills to answer the customer's question. The necessary technology has been installed and is ready for use. However, the Next Available Technology cannot be implemented until the BSBA office negotiates a Memorandum of Understanding with the National Treasury Employees Union.

Taxpayers are continuing to elect to *e-file*, and the IRS is continuing to offer more e-services. Since 2002, the IRS has added e-services such as online registration for e-services and transcript delivery service, which allows eligible tax professionals to request and receive account transcripts, wage and income documents, and tax return transcripts. The IRS has also added electronic account resolution, which allows tax professionals to electronically inquire about individual or business account problems, refunds, installment agreements, and missing payments or notices. In Fiscal Year 2007, the IRS plans to offer additional electronic products, including e-services for Reporting Agents[7] and income verification express services, which provide

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[7] A Reporting Agent is an accounting service, a franchiser, a bank, or other person who is authorized to prepare electronically an Employer's Annual Federal Unemployment (FUTA) Tax Return (Form 940), Employer's Quarterly Federal Tax Return (Form 941), and Employer's Annual Federal Tax Return (Form 944).

2-business day processing and delivery of return transcripts. Customers having difficulty using these new products will be supported by the E-Help Desk Program.

With this continued expansion in the availability and use of e-services, improvements are needed to ensure the Program can continue to provide effective customer service. Figure 2 provides Fiscal Years 2005 and 2006 volumes associated with the categories of electronic products supported by the E-Help Desk.

**Figure 2: Volumes of Electronic Products Supported by the E-Help Desk
(in millions)**

Product Category	Fiscal Year 2005 Volumes	Fiscal Year 2006[8] Volumes
E-file	68	72
EFTPS	78	82
E-Services	55	90
Central Contractor Registration	Not applicable	.003
Totals	**201**	**244[9]**

Sources: Websites IRS.gov, eta.hq.irs.gov, and ccr.gov and presentation provided by the IRS.

To adequately support the growth of *e-filing* and e-services, the IRS must ensure its Program is operating efficiently and effectively and is meeting the needs of its customers and the IRS. This requires developing a measurement system to assess the quality and effectiveness of the Program and ensuring the management information system produces accurate and complete data with which to monitor the Program. In addition, the present organizational alignment of the Program creates a situation in which the BSBA office, which establishes the policies and procedures, does not have control over the personnel responsible for carrying out these policies and procedures.

During the course of the audit, we brought our concerns to the attention of BSBA office management. Management indicated that they have already begun to take actions to address our concerns.

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[8] Totals for Fiscal Year 2006 are as of September 21, 2006; September 22, 2006; September 18, 2006; and August 31, 2006, respectively.
[9] Total was rounded for readability.

A quality measurement system is needed to monitor the quality and effectiveness of the E-Help Desk Program

Modern management practices and various statutory and regulatory provisions require the IRS to set performance goals for organizational units and to measure the progress towards achieving those goals. To fulfill these requirements, the IRS has established a balanced performance measurement system designed to align with the IRS' mission and goals at all levels of the organization. The balanced measures encompass three components: Customer Satisfaction, Employee

> **The E-Help Desk Program does not currently measure Customer Satisfaction or the Accuracy of Responses to Customers.**

Satisfaction, and Business Results. The Business Results Measures consist of numerical scores determined under the Quality Measures and the Quantity Measures. The Program has not fully established quality measures or goals or developed processes and procedures to measure the progress towards achieving those goals.

Customer satisfaction is not being measured

Although Program guidelines detail specific actions to be taken to measure customer satisfaction, either these actions were not taken or there is no documentation to support the actions that were taken. Guidelines indicate that customer satisfaction will be measured from feedback obtained from:

o **The Nationwide Tax Forums**. The last time formal feedback was obtained was via the 2003 Nationwide Tax Forum. BSBA office management stated they have not held additional focus groups since 2003 because they wanted to address the recommendations from the 2003 Nationwide Tax Forum before obtaining new feedback. BSBA office management stated they are planning to obtain feedback during the 2007 Nationwide Tax Forum.

o **The Software Developers Conference**. BSBA office management stated they have attended these conferences annually. However, the BSBA office did not maintain documentation to support the feedback it received at these conferences.

o **The Council for Electronic Revenue Communication Advancement**. BSBA office management stated they have attended these conferences annually, except for the 2006 conference. However, the BSBA office did not maintain documentation to support the feedback it received at these conferences.

The BSBA office submitted a narrative justification to Wage and Investment Division management for approval to establish an E-Help Customer Satisfaction Project. The request was submitted on June 19, 2006. The purpose of this Project is to survey E-Help Desk customers to determine their satisfaction with E-Help Desk services.

Quality measures and procedures have not been fully established and developed

The Program has three quality measures and goals: Resolved on First Contact (95 percent), Level of Service (85 percent), and Percentage of E-Cases Opened Versus Incoming Calls (85 percent). However, the Program has no measure to evaluate the accuracy of the responses the E-Help Desk assistors are providing to their customers.

Although E-Help Desk guidelines implemented in March 2006 require managers to monitor a minimum of two calls, review a minimum of two e-cases for each assistor each month, and document the results, there are no procedures in place to ensure these reviews are being completed. Calls are currently not being monitored because the BSBA office is in negotiations with the National Treasury Employees Union on aspects of the monitoring process. Review of a random sample of 20 of 168 employees (5 employees from each E-Help Desk site) determined that e-case reviews either were not performed or the results of the e-case reviews were not maintained for the months of May and June 2006.

Also, neither the call monitoring nor the case reviews are currently being used to evaluate the quality of the Program. Our review of a random sample of 97 e-cases found that in 4 e-cases (4 percent) the customers received incorrect answers (i.e., the solutions did not address the customer questions). For 7 e-cases (7 percent), the assistors did not adequately document the e-cases, and we were unable to determine if the customers received the correct answers. Projecting our results over the universe of 390,461 e-cases closed with solutions, there is a potential that 16,101 customers received incorrect answers and that another 28,178 e-cases have inadequate documentation to assess the accuracy of the responses provided to the customers.

> **We estimate that 16,101 customers received incorrect answers and another 28,178 e-cases do not have adequate documentation to assess the accuracy of the responses provided.**

Without an accuracy measure and procedures and processes in place to monitor the quality of the Program, the effectiveness of the Program cannot be determined. The BSBA office plans to implement Contact Recording, which is an automated quality monitoring system that captures voice elements of customers' contacts and employees' corresponding computer desktop activities. Contact Recording is used in the IRS Toll-Free Telephone Program to both monitor employee performance and measure program quality. However, the benefit of Contact Recording will not be fully realized without implementation of an operational quality review system.

Processes and procedures have not been developed to ensure predefined solutions are accurate

To ensure the consistency of responses provided to customers, the E-Help Desk uses a set of predefined solutions for common problems. The predefined solutions allow assistors to resolve customer problems quickly and efficiently. Additionally, the BSBA office is exploring the option of posting these solutions on the IRS public website, IRS.gov, as a self-assistance option for customers.

However, there are no requirements to document the steps taken to create the predefined solutions and ensure they are accurate. Although our review of 15 solutions identified only 1 partially inaccurate solution, as the Program grows and new solutions are added, it is essential that all steps are taken to ensure the solutions are accurate, including managerial reviews and approvals.

Also, processes and procedures have not been developed to ensure existing solutions are periodically reviewed to ensure they are current and accurate. Solutions can become obsolete or inaccurate as e-services change. For example, one solution we reviewed related to the IRS TeleFile Program,[10] which was discontinued as of August 2005. However, the solution was not declared to be expired (no longer valid) until January 2006. A solution review team was created in March 2006, and as a result of its review, 81 (15 percent) of 542 of the predefined solutions were expired or superseded (modifications needed to be made to the solutions).[11] Procedures are needed to ensure periodic reviews are completed, including documenting the specific reasons the solutions were expired or superseded. This will help ensure the solutions remain accurate.

Processes and procedures need to be developed to ensure management information is accurate and reliable

Information contained in the EHSS is inaccurate and incomplete. An analysis of EHSS data determined the information relating to e-cases closed on the first contact was inaccurate. In addition, there are indications that the EHSS is incomplete because assistors are not creating or updating e-cases when calls are handled. Furthermore, BSBA office management stated they do not review e-cases with general solutions to determine if new predefined solutions should be created to address the specific issues raised by customers.

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[10] The TeleFile Program allowed taxpayers to file simple tax returns by telephone.
[11] The solutions were expired or superseded based on a March 2006 BSBA office initiative to review all solutions.

The Resolved on First Contact indicator is not reliable

IRS customers expect accurate assistance from the IRS, preferably on their first contact. Resolving a customer's issue on the first contact saves both the customer and the IRS the need to expend time and resources on subsequent contacts to resolve the same issue. Program guidelines require assistors to input a Resolved on First Contact indicator on the e-case in the EHSS. If a customer calls back with the same issue, the assistor is to remove the indicator. The indicator is not reliable because assistors are not always able to identify previously created e-cases for a customer calling back with the same issue and the assistors are not correctly inputting the indicator.

EHSS guidelines do not require assistors to enter identifying customer information into e-cases; therefore, the e-cases do not always contain sufficient information to identify customers. As a result, assistors are not always able to identify and retrieve the previous e-case and remove the Resolved on First Contact indicator, even though the customer has called back with the same issue. An analysis of 543,515 e-cases[12] identified that 378,381 (70 percent) did not contain identifying customer information.

In addition, an analysis of the 543,515 e-cases showed 538,298 (99 percent) of the contacts contained a Resolved on First Contact indicator. However, 18,945 (4 percent) of these e-cases were not closed on the date the call was received, which could indicate these cases were not resolved on first contact. BSBA office management indicated they have made a system change that will allow an assistor who did not create the e-case to uncheck the Resolved on First Contact indicator if the e-case is reopened.

E-case data are incomplete

Assistors are not creating e-cases for all calls or are using general solutions to close e-cases. Program guidelines require each customer contact to be documented as a new or existing e-case. However, a review of key Program statistics identified that e-cases are not being created or updated for every call. For example, for Fiscal Year 2006, the E-Help Desk sites answered 358,786 calls. However, e-cases created totaled only 261,909, with 96,877 calls (27 percent) being answered without an e-case being created. We recognize that some of these calls may be related to a previous contact. However, because customer information is not always maintained, it is impossible to determine the number of these 96,877 calls that would not result in an e-case being created.

The BSBA office continually stresses the need to create e-cases. However, Figure 3 shows that assistors created e-cases for only about 72 percent of answered calls for Fiscal Years 2005 and 2006.

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[12] The EHSS data extract included contacts for both open and resolved cases made with the E-Help Desk during the period July 9, 2004, through June 1, 2006.

Figure 3: Percentage of E-Cases Opened Versus Calls Answered

E-Help Desk Site	Fiscal Year 2005	Fiscal Year 2006
Andover, Massachusetts	51%	68%
Austin, Texas	77%	76%
Cincinnati, Ohio	78%	66%
Ogden, Utah	83%	82%
Program Average	**72%**	**73%**

Source: IRS Toll-Free Telephone Reports for Fiscal Years 2005 and 2006.[13]

EHSS downtime also affects the creation of e-cases. System downtime occurs when assistors are unable to access the EHSS to add or update e-cases. Procedures require assistors to handwrite information relating to the calls during the period the EHSS is down. If it is down for fewer than 4 hours, the assistors are instructed to go back and enter the information into the EHSS. However, assistors advised us that there were times when the System was down for fewer than 4 hours, but they did not update the EHSS.

BSBA office management believes EHSS downtime is minimal. However, an analysis of System downtime shows the EHSS was down 34.4 hours during the period August 21 through September 15, 2006. Figure 4 presents EHSS downtime results.

Figure 4: EHSS Downtime

E-Help Desk Site	Days When System Downtime Was Experienced	Total Hours System Was Down
Andover, Massachusetts	1	2.58
Austin, Texas	4	8.15
Cincinnati, Ohio	5	5.02
Ogden, Utah	3	18.65
Totals	**13**	**34.40**

Source: Information obtained from the four E-Help Desk sites for the period August 21 through September 15, 2006.

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[13] As of August 3, 2006.

General solutions are solutions used when a predefined solution does not address the customer's inquiry. Of the 533,417[14] e-cases, 72,205 (14 percent) e-cases used general solutions. BSBA office management stated they do not review the e-cases for which general solutions were used to determine if new predefined solutions should have been created to address the specific issues raised by the customers. Figure 5 provides a breakdown by business unit of the number of times general solutions were used.

Figure 5: General Solutions Used, by Business Unit

Business Unit	Total Solutions Used	Total General Solutions Used	Percentage of General Solutions Used
Business	45,419	5,054	11%
Electronic Services	225,968	21,701	10%
Employment	32,069	4,523	14%
Individual	229,961	40,927	18%
Totals:	**533,417**	**72,205**	**14%**

Source: E-Help Desk Solutions Database from May 2004 to July 2006.

Inaccurate and incomplete management information contained in the EHSS affects the ability of the BSBA office to accurately report business results. If the above cited issues are not addressed, the IRS is unlikely to be able to accurately measure progress towards meeting Program goals.

Processes have not been developed to ensure employees complete required training

Review of a random sample of 19 assistors determined that none had completed all the Fiscal Year 2006 required training. In addition, the BSBA office did not maintain documentation to support assistors' training. Although the BSBA office obtained training plans, it did not have a process to ensure the training was completed.

Guidelines state that training is critical to the accomplishment of the goals and objectives of the Program. The Program curriculum is designed to provide assistors with the skills needed to perform their jobs. Training includes refresher courses in writing and the use of various software programs (email, spreadsheet, etc.). However, the additional required courses are designed to provide specific training on those technical areas in which assistors will be providing support to customers. Figure 6 identifies some of the required technical training, the number of assistors that were required to take the training, and the number of assistors that completed the training.

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[14] Represents e-cases included in the E-Help Desk Solutions Database from May 2004 to July 2006.

Figure 6: Required Technical Training for 19 Assistors Sampled

Training Course Description	Assistors Required to Complete Course	Assistors Who Completed the Course	Percentage of Assistors Who Completed the Required Course
IRS *e-file* for Submission Processing	10	4	40%
Business Master File,[15] Form 1065, Form 1120, and Form 1041[16]	5	0	0%
Business Master File, Form 940/Form 941[17]	4	2	50%
E-Help Refresher Training	19	7	37%
Using the E-Help Support System	19	6	32%

Source: Our analysis of information provided by the IRS relating to E-Help Desk assistor training.

Ensuring assistors complete required training will be of greater importance as the IRS moves forward with implementation of the Next Available Technology. This will require all assistors to have training on all e-services supported by the Program. Currently, assistors specialize in specific electronic products.

The BSBA office noted that the inability to ensure required training is completed is an example of a problem with the organizational alignment of the Program. The BSBA office establishes the policies and procedures for the Program; however, it does not have control over the personnel responsible for carrying out these policies and procedures. The BSBA office develops the policies and procedures relating to the necessary training E-Help Desk assistors are required to complete, but the assistors are assigned to the Submission Processing function.

> *With the current organizational alignment, the BSBA office creates policies and procedures but does not have control over the assistors responsible for carrying out these policies and procedures.*

The mission of the Program is to provide superior help desk support for IRS e-government programs by using multichannel communication and case management tools. Realigning the assistors under the control of the BSBA office would ensure the organization that establishes the

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[15] The IRS database that consists of Federal tax-related transactions and accounts for businesses. These include employment taxes, income taxes on businesses, and excise taxes.
[16] U.S. Return of Partnership Income (Form 1065); U.S. Corporation Income Tax Return (Form 1120); and U.S. Income Tax Return for Estates and Trusts (Form 1041).
[17] Employer's Annual Federal Unemployment (FUTA) Tax Return (Form 940) and Employer's Quarterly Federal Tax Return (Form 941).

policies and procedures for the Program is also the organization responsible for the assistors who carry out these policies and procedures.

To ensure the Program is providing superior customer service, it is essential that assistors complete required training and quality performance measures are established. Processes to measure progress towards meeting those performance measures also need to be developed. These improvements are needed to ensure results from measures are accurately communicated to customers, stakeholders, and other interested parties.

Recommendations

The Commissioner, Wage and Investment Division, should:

Recommendation 1: Develop a process to ensure customer satisfaction is timely measured.

> ***Management's Response:*** IRS management agreed with the recommendation. Management is considering administering a Fiscal Year 2007 E-Help Desk customer satisfaction survey and a focus group for the 2007 IRS Nationwide Tax Forums.

Recommendation 2: Develop quality measures as well as a process to assess progress towards achieving the measures. This should include a measure of the accuracy of responses provided to customers.

> ***Management's Response:*** IRS management agreed with the recommendation. Management is working to establish quality measures and procedures with plans to add the E-Help Desk Program to the Embedded Quality process. In addition, Contact Recording will be implemented in the E-Help Desk sites.

Recommendation 3: Develop processes and procedures to ensure predefined solutions are accurately developed, timely monitored, and appropriately approved.

> ***Management's Response:*** IRS management agreed with the recommendation. Management has reviewed and revised the solutions development process. The new process requires documentation of the source or origin of solutions, approval before a solution can be placed into production, and an annual review of solutions.

Recommendation 4: Develop processes and procedures to ensure management information is complete and accurate. This should include (a) ensuring accuracy of Resolved on First Contact indicator, (b) ensuring customer information is included in the e-case to enable an assistor to identify previous customer contacts, (c) ensuring e-cases are created or updated for all incoming calls, (d) monitoring and assessing the effect that EHSS downtime may have on the creation of e-cases, and (e) reviewing the use of general solutions to determine if a new solution should have been proposed to address the specific issue raised by the customer.

Management's Response: IRS management agreed with the recommendation. Management will require weekly e-case reviews, with reports of findings to be provided to the Program Office and site managers for feedback and coaching purposes. Programming will be developed to automatically uncheck the Resolved on First Contact field when an e-case is reopened. Implementation of the Computer Telephony Integration will help ensure e-cases are created or updated for all incoming calls. In addition, the Program Office will monitor system downtime, and the use of general solutions has been removed.

Recommendation 5: Develop a process to ensure assistors complete required training.

Management's Response: IRS management agreed with the recommendation. Management has developed a process to ensure assistors have completed required training. The Program Office will monitor training plans to completion and will review random samples of employees to ensure training has been conducted.

Recommendation 6: Realign the E-Help Desk Program assistors under the BSBA office.

Management's Response: IRS management agreed with the recommendation. Management will realign E-Help Desk assistors with the office that establishes policies and procedures.

Detailed Objective, Scope, and Methodology

Our overall objective was to determine whether the IRS E-Help Desk Program is providing quality customer service. To accomplish this objective, we:

I. Determined whether the IRS has established effective measures and goals for the E-Help Desk Program by obtaining reports used to track Program measures and goals, interviewing IRS management, and assessing management's ability to monitor Program performance.

II. Determined whether the IRS has a quality assurance plan for the Program by interviewing Program management and surveying IRS management at the four E-Help Desk call sites.

III. Determined whether the assistors for the Program are properly trained.

   A. Reviewed the Internal Revenue Manual to identify training classes that are required for E-Help Desk assistors.

   B. Contacted IRS management at each of the four E-Help Desks call sites to determine whether they have any locally required training classes.

   C. Randomly selected 20 of 90 assistors (5 assistors from each of the 4 E-Help Desk call sites). We determined whether they had received the required training. Because we found that 19 assistors had not received all of the required training (1 assistor was not working during the time period of our review), this would be a 100 percent error rate. With a 100 percent error rate, 90 percent confidence level, and ±5 percent precision rate, a sample size of zero is produced. We did not perform further testing in this area.

   D. When we determined the E-Help Desk assistors were not properly trained, attempted to determine the effect on the E-Help Desk customers and the clients they serve.

IV. Determined the accuracy of the solutions and the accuracy and reliability of the management information system used in the Program.

   A. Analyzed the EHSS. The EHSS extract covered the period July 9, 2004, through June 1, 2006. We validated the file by verifying five e-cases on the file to the actual e-cases on the system. However, although we were able to validate the data, we determined the EHSS data are incomplete (e-cases were not always created) and the field relating to Resolved on First Contact was inaccurate. Many anomalies exist in the data, but these were the best data available from the IRS. To obtain statistics for

e-cases that were resolved on first contact, we selected the e-cases that were in both of the IRS-provided files: auditmainrec and casemainrec. These files were an extract of the EHSS. This produced 543,515 unique e-cases; 390,393 of these e-cases had a solution.

B. Determined whether the IRS validates the information on the EHSS.

C. Analyzed the solutions database from the EHSS. The solutions database contained 542 solutions and covered the time period May 2004 to July 2006.

D. Determined whether solutions included in the EHSS are accurate through a stop or go sampling plan. Stop or go sampling involves sampling a universe in increments and examining each incremental sample before deciding when to stop. To select the sample, we put the solutions in order by solution identification number and, using a random number generator, selected our sample. We reviewed the first 15 solutions selected from the 542 solutions. Because we found only 1 of the first 15 solutions to be incorrect, we decided not to review an additional 32 solutions to project an error rate. We did not pursue this issue further.

E. Determined whether information captured in the EHSS accurately reflects the results of the Program by selecting a random sample of 97 questions and associated solutions. We determined whether the solutions matched the questions. This would allow us to achieve a precision rate of ± 5 percent given an estimated error rate of 10 percent and a confidence level of 90 percent. To select the sample, we queried the 543,850 unique e-cases (from the IRS-provided extract of the EHSS: auditmainrec file) to obtain the unique e-cases that had an associated solution. We put the resulting 390,461 e-cases in order by e-case number. We then used a random number generator to select our sample.

F. When we determined the E-Help Desk management information system was not accurate and reliable, attempted to determine the effect on the E-Help Desk customers, on the taxpayer clients they serve, and on IRS management's ability to monitor the measures and goals of the Program.

V. Determined whether the IRS has an effective process to ensure information from the Program is used to improve IRS processes by interviewing management and product owners and determining what information from the Program is provided to the IRS product owners.

Major Contributors to This Report

Michael McKenney, Assistant Inspector General for Audit (Wage and Investment Income Programs)
Augusta R. Cook, Director
Russell P. Martin, Audit Manager
Pamela DeSimone, Lead Auditor
Roberta Fuller, Auditor
Kathy Henderson, Auditor
Mary Keyes, Auditor
Geraldine Vaughn, Auditor
James Allen, Information Technology Specialist

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Audit Liaison: Senior Operations Advisor, Wage and Investment Division SE:W:S

Outcome Measures

This appendix presents detailed information on the measurable effect that our recommended corrective actions will have on tax administration. These benefits will be incorporated into our Semiannual Report to Congress.

Type and Value of Outcome Measure:

- Reliability of Information – Potential; 28,178 e-cases with inadequate documentation to assess the accuracy of the responses provided to the customers (see page 4).

Methodology Used to Measure the Reported Benefit:

We reviewed a statistical sample of 97 e-cases and found that in 7 (7 percent) the assistors did not adequately document the e-cases. For these seven e-cases, we were unable to determine if the customers received the correct answers. Projecting our results over the universe of 390,461 e-cases closed with solutions, there is a potential that 28,178 e-cases have inadequate documentation to assess the accuracy of the responses provided to the customers.

The sample size allowed us to achieve a 90 percent confidence level with an estimated 10 percent error rate and a precision rate of ±5 percent. To select the sample, we queried the 543,850[1] unique e-cases (from the IRS-provided file) to obtain the unique e-cases that had an associated solution. We put the resulting 390,461 e-cases in order by e-case number. We then used a random number generator to select our sample.

Type and Value of Outcome Measure:

- Taxpayer Burden – Potential; 16,101 customers received incorrect answers (see page 4).

Methodology Used to Measure the Reported Benefit:

We reviewed a statistical sample of 97 e-cases and found that in 4 (4 percent) the customers received incorrect answers (i.e., the solutions did not address the customers' questions). Projecting our results over the universe of 390,461 e-cases closed with solutions, there is a potential that 16,101 customers received incorrect answers.

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[1] Our projections, based on the best data available, are conservative because e-cases were not always created for incoming calls.

The sample size allowed us to achieve a 90 percent confidence level with an estimated 10 percent error rate and a precision rate of ±5 percent. To select the sample, we queried the 543,850 unique e-cases (from the IRS-provided file) to obtain the unique e-cases that had an associated solution. We put the resulting 390,461 e-cases in order by e-case number. We then used a random number generator to select our sample.

Customers of the E-Help Desk

Electronic Return Originators

Electronic Return Originators originate the electronic submission of income tax returns to the IRS. An Electronic Return Originator may originate the electronic submission of income tax returns that are either prepared by the Electronic Return Originator firm or collected from a taxpayer.

Enrolled Agents

Enrolled agents have earned the privilege of representing taxpayers before the IRS. Enrolled agents, like attorneys and certified public accountants, are unrestricted as to which taxpayers they can represent, what types of tax matters they can handle, and which IRS offices they can practice before.

Financial Institutions

Financial institutions act as agents that provide financial services for their clients. Financial institutions are users of the E-Help Desk because they use the Taxpayer Identification Number[1] Matching Program to assist them with perfecting their payee data for purposes of filing annual Information Returns, such as Miscellaneous Income (Form 1099-MISC) or Dividends and Distributions (Form 1099-DIV). Because the majority of financial institutions report payments to customers on Form 1099, the Taxpayer Identification Number Matching Program has been instrumental in helping the financial institutions correct their payee information prior to filing Information Returns.

Federal Government Agencies

Federal Government agencies contract to do business with other Federal Government agencies. The Central Contractor Registration is the primary registrant database for the Federal Government. It collects, validates, stores, and disseminates data in support of agency acquisition missions. Both current and potential Federal Government registrants are required to register in the Central Contractor Registration to be awarded contracts by the Federal Government. The Central Contractor Registration validates the registrant information and electronically shares the secure and encrypted data with the Federal

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[1] A nine-digit number assigned to taxpayers for identification purposes. Depending upon the nature of the taxpayer, the Taxpayer Identification Number is an Employer Identification Number, a Social Security Number, or an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number.

Government agencies' finance offices to facilitate paperless payments through electronic funds transfer.

Federal Government Contractors

Federal Government contractors do business with the Federal Government. The Central Contractor Registration is the primary registrant database for the Federal Government. It collects, validates, stores, and disseminates data in support of agency acquisition missions. Both current and potential Federal Government registrants are required to register in the Central Contractor Registration to be awarded contracts by the Federal Government. Registrants must update or renew their registration at least once per year to maintain an active status. In addition, entities (nonprofits, educational organizations, State and regional agencies, etc.) that apply for assistance awards from the Federal Government through Grants.gov must now register with the Central Contractor Registration. The Central Contractor Registration validates the registrant information and electronically shares the secure and encrypted data with the Federal Government agencies' finance offices to facilitate paperless payments through electronic funds transfer.

Intermediate Service Providers

Intermediate Service Providers receive tax return information from Electronic Return Originators, or from taxpayers that *e-file* from home using their personal computers, either online or by using commercial tax preparation software. Intermediate Service Providers process the tax return information and either forward the information to a Transmitter or send the information back to the Electronic Return Originators or taxpayers.

IRS Employees

IRS employees can *e-file* their tax returns in IRS offices.

Large Corporations

Large corporations are those that, for Tax Year 2005 tax returns (due in 2006) with total assets of $50 million or more, are required to *e-file* their U.S. Corporation Income Tax Returns (Form 1120) or U.S. Income Tax Returns for an S Corporation (Form 1120S). In addition, tax-exempt organizations with total assets of $100 million or more were required to *e-file* their Tax Year 2005 Returns of Organization Exempt From Income Tax (Form 990).

Beginning in 2007, the *e-filing* requirement will be expanded to include the Tax Year 2006 tax returns of corporations and tax-exempt organizations with $10 million or more in total assets. In addition, private foundations and charitable trusts will be required to *e-file* their Returns of Private Foundation (Form 990-PF) regardless of their asset size.

The *e-filing* requirements apply only to entities that file at least 250 returns, including income tax, excise tax, information, and employment tax returns, during a calendar year.

Reporting Agencies

Reporting agencies include accounting services, franchisers, banks, or other persons that are authorized to *e-file* Employer's Quarterly Federal Tax Returns (Form 941) and Employer's Annual Federal Unemployment (FUTA) Tax Returns (Form 940) for a taxpayer.

Software Developers

Software developers write the programs to IRS specifications that make IRS *e-file* and Federal/State *e-file* possible. The IRS and participating States require that all software pass a series of tests each year. Once approved, this software may be sold and used by Electronic Return Originators, Reporting Agents,[2] Intermediate Service Providers, and Transmitters.

State Tax Administration Agencies

The IRS shares information from *e-file* with the States. If there is a problem, the States contact the E-Help Desk for resolution.

Tax Counseling for the Elderly

The Tax Counseling for the Elderly Program provides free tax help to people age 60 and older. Trained volunteers from nonprofit organizations provide free tax counseling and basic income tax return preparation for senior citizens. *E-filing* of tax returns is also offered.

Taxpayer Assistance Centers

The Taxpayer Assistance Centers are IRS offices that offer personal tax help when the taxpayer believes his or her tax issue cannot be handled online or by telephone and the taxpayer wants face-to-face tax assistance. *E-filing* of tax returns is also offered for certain taxpayers.

Transmitters

Transmitters convert the file sent by a taxpayer into a format that meets IRS specifications and transmit it to the IRS. Transmitters must have software and modems that allow them to connect with IRS computers. The IRS checks the return and notifies

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[2] A Reporting Agent is an accounting service, a franchiser, a bank, or other person who is authorized to prepare electronically an Employer's Annual Federal Unemployment (FUTA) Tax Return (Form 940), Employer's Quarterly Federal Tax Return (Form 941), and Employer's Annual Federal Tax Return (Form 944).

the Transmitter (which then informs the taxpayer) whether the return has been accepted or rejected.

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Sites

The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program offers free tax help to low- to moderate-income people who cannot prepare their own tax returns. Basic tax returns are prepared by volunteers across the country. *E-filing* of tax returns is also offered.

Electronic Products Supported by the E-Help Desk

E-file:[1]
- U.S. Individual Income Tax Return (Form 1040).
- U.S. Individual Income Tax Return (Form 1040A).
- Income Tax Return for Single and Joint Filers With No Dependents (Form 1040EZ).
- Application for Automatic Extension of Time To File U.S. Individual Income Tax Return (Form 4868).
- Application for Extension of Time To File U.S. Income Tax Return (Form 2350).
- Installment Agreement Request (Form 9465).
- Notice Concerning Fiduciary Relationship (Form 56).
- Self-Select Personal Identification Number.
- Practitioner Personal Identification Number.
- Combined Federal State.[2]
- U.S. Individual Income Tax Declaration for an IRS *e-file* Return (Form 8453).
- U.S. Individual Income Tax Declaration for an IRS *e-file* Online Return (Form 8453-OL).
- Employer's Quarterly Federal Tax Return (Form 941).
- Employer's Annual Federal Unemployment (FUTA) Tax Return (Form 940).
- U.S. Income Tax Return for Estates and Trusts (Form 1041).
- U.S. Return of Partnership Income (Form 1065).
- Modernized *e-file*.

EFTPS:[3]
- EFTPS Online.
- EFTPS Phone.
- EFTPS Batch Provider.
- EFTPS Bulk Provider.

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[1] The process of submitting tax forms over the Internet, using computers and tax preparation software.

[2] The Combined Federal State project allows for Transmitters of Information Return Program documents on tape to file once with the IRS instead of having to file with both the IRS and the participating State income tax agencies.

[3] The EFTPS allows taxpayers and tax professionals to use the telephone, personal computer software, or the Internet to initiate tax payments.

E-Services:[4]

- Registration.
- *E-file* Application.
- Disclosure Authorization.
- Preparer Taxpayer Identification Number.
- Transcript Delivery System.
- Electronic Account Resolution.
- Interactive and Bulk Taxpayer Identification Number Matching.

Central Contractor Registration:[5]

- North American Industry Classification System Codes.
- Standard Industrial Classification Codes.
- Product Service Codes.
- Federal Supply Classification Codes.

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[4] The multiple e-services offered by the IRS to tax professionals and payers to allow them to conduct business with the IRS electronically.

[5] The primary registrant database for the Federal Government. The Central Contractor Registration collects, validates, stores, and disseminates data in support of agency acquisition missions.

Management's Response to the Draft Report

DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY
INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE
ATLANTA, GA 30308

COMMISSIONER
WAGE AND INVESTMENT DIVISION

December 22, 2006

MEMORANDUM FOR MICHAEL R. PHILLIPS
DEPUTY INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR AUDIT

FROM: Richard J. Morgante   *Richard J. Morgante*
                   Commissioner, Wage and Investment Division

SUBJECT: Draft Audit Report – Improvements to the E-Help Desk Are
                   Needed to Support Expanding Electronic Products and Services
                   (Audit # 200640032)

I reviewed the subject draft report and appreciate your recognition of the work we do to
support our customers' successful use of the electronic products and services we
provide. As noted in your report, we continue to identify ways to improve the e-help
Desk program's efficiency and customer service, including implementing the e-help
Support System (EHSS) to improve customer interaction and tracking, consolidating the
six E-File Help Desk sites, adding e-services for online registration and transcript
delivery service, and implementing Next Available Agent/Assistor technology. As we
add new e-services to the list that we currently provide, the e-help Desk will continue to
support them.

Despite these and other enhancements to the e-help Desk program, opportunities for
improvement remain. We have already taken a number of actions to address your
recommendations. For example:

- We are considering administering a customer satisfaction survey focused
  specifically on e-help Desk.
- Initial steps are being taken to institute the Embedded Quality process on the e-
  help Desk. The e-help Desk program also began implementing Contact
  Recording, which records customer contacts for subsequent quality review and
  performance feedback, in November 2006.

Also, Internal Revenue Manuals (IRM) will be updated to provide instructions for
maintaining the solutions database, which provides solutions for approximately 600
technical problems. We are assessing additional methods to review the contents of the
solutions database to ensure information provided to customers is accurate. To further
assure the effectiveness of e-help Desk operations:

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- We are implementing additional controls to ensure management information in EHSS is complete and accurate.
- We will update IRM 1.4.18, e-help Desk Managers Guide, which includes specific managerial responsibilities to ensure employees receive appropriate training.
- E-help Desk assistors will be realigned to the e-help Operations Strategy and Support (EOSS) Office within the Customer Account Services (CAS) organization in FY 2008. As recommended, this action will directly align the office that establishes policies and procedures with the employees who actually perform the work.

We agree with the outcome measures in your report, and detailed comments to your recommendations are attached. If you have any questions, please call me at (404) 338-7060, or members of your staff may contact Betsy Kinter, Director, Customer Account Services, at (404) 338-8910.

Attachment

Attachment

The Commissioner, Wage and Investment Division, should:

RECOMMENDATION 1
Develop a process to ensure customer satisfaction is timely measured.

CORRECTIVE ACTION
We agree with this recommendation and have taken two actions to ensure customer satisfaction is timely measured.

1. We are considering administering an e-help Desk customer satisfaction survey for FY2007 which will allow us to:

   - Determine customer satisfaction with e-help Desk services (including call handle/hold times and the accuracy of assistor responses).
   - Obtain information regarding customer needs (including customers' preferred methods of contact).
   - Identify opportunities for improvement in our work processes.
   - Establish baseline customer satisfaction levels and track e-help Desk performance over time.

2. We are considering a focus group for the 2007 IRS Nationwide Tax Forums. In this focus group, we plan to:

   - Educate customers on the future of e-help.
   - Confirm and learn what online services users desire.
   - Identify opportunities for improvement in our existing programs, services, and products.
   - Determine if our Business Measures are consistent with our customers' perceptions.
   - Survey customers on their overall satisfaction with the e-help Desk.

IMPLEMENTATION DATE
1. November 15, 2007, since the customer satisfaction survey is contingent upon the resolution of the current Continuing Resolution by the end of FY 2007.

2. November 15, 2007

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL
Director, W&I CAS

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CORRECTIVE ACTION MONITORING PLAN
We will monitor these corrective actions as part of our internal management control system.

RECOMMENDATION 2
Develop quality measures as well as a process to assess progress towards achieving the measures. This should include a measure of the accuracy of responses provided to customers.

CORRECTIVE ACTION
We agree with this recommendation and have taken the following two actions to address the recommendation:

1. We are working with the Embedded Quality (EQ) team to establish quality measures and procedures for the e-help Desk and are preparing a request for the e-help Desk to be added to the EQ process. Once added to the EQ process, the e-help Desk will be better able to measure accuracy and identify improvement opportunities for evaluative and non-evaluative purposes.

2. We are implementing the Contact Recording (CR) system in the e-help Desk sites. Telephone contacts with customers, as well as screen-captures of case research and actions taken will be simultaneously recorded. This will enable e-help Desk managers to monitor, evaluate, coach, and develop tools for enhancing the quality of e-help employees' interactions with customers.

IMPLEMENTATION DATE
1. An action plan will be developed by January 15, 2007, for implementing the EQ process.

2. March 15, 2007. We began the implementation of CR at three sites (Andover, Cincinnati, and Ogden) on November 27, 2006, and we plan to implement CR in the Austin site in February 2007.

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL
Director, W&I CAS

CORRECTIVE ACTION MONITORING PLAN
We will monitor the corrective actions as part of our internal management control system.

3

RECOMMENDATION 3
Develop processes and procedures to ensure predefined solutions are accurately developed, timely monitored, and appropriately approved.

CORRECTIVE ACTION
We agree with this recommendation. The e-help Support System (EHSS) contains approximately 600 predefined solutions for problems that are commonly the subject of e-help Desk contacts. We have reviewed and revised the solutions development process contained in Internal Revenue Manual (IRM) 3.42.7, Submission Processing, Electronic Tax Administration, e-help Desk, and IRM 1.4.18, Organization, Finance, Management, Resource Guide for Managers, e-help Desk Managers Guide. The new process requires documentation of the source or origin of solutions, approval of the applicable business owner before a solution can be placed into production, and that solutions are annually reviewed for quality and updated as necessary.

IMPLEMENTATION DATE
Both IRMs will be updated by February 15, 2007, to reflect the new process.

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL
Director, W&I CAS

CORRECTIVE ACTION MONITORING PLAN
We will monitor the corrective actions as part of our internal management control system.

RECOMMENDATION 4
Develop processes and procedures to ensure management information is complete and accurate. This should include: (a) ensuring accuracy of Resolved on First Contact indicator, (b) ensuring customer information is included in the e-case to enable an assistor to identify previous customer contacts, (c) ensuring e-cases are created or updated for all incoming calls, (d) monitoring and assessing the effect that E-Help Support System (EHSS) downtime may have on the creation of e-cases, and (e) reviewing the use of general solutions to determine if a new solution should have been proposed to address the specific issue raised by the customer.

CORRECTIVE ACTION
We agree with this recommendation. Relative to developing processes and procedures to ensure management information is complete and accurate, e-help Level 2 assistors (assistors with higher levels of expertise) will begin performing weekly e-case reviews, and reports of their findings will be provided to the program office and site managers for feedback and coaching purposes.

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Regarding the specifically enumerated components of this recommendation, we have taken, or will take, the following actions:

a) Ensuring accuracy of Resolved on First Contact indicator – By March 2007, EHSS will include programming to automatically uncheck the Resolved on First Contact field when an e-case is reopened. In the interim, programming has been completed to allow the manual removal of the check when an e-case is reopened.
b) Ensuring customer information is included in the e-case to enable assistor to identify previous customer contacts – e-help is scheduled to implement Computer Telephony Integration (CTI) in January 2008. The CTI allows information to be shared between the telephone and the computer. The CTI in the IRS environment is envisioned to provide self-authentication (shared secrets) between customers and the IRS, and send a screen-pop to the assistor's desktop. The EHSS will use this identifying information to create an e-case. To ensure that customer information is included, the Third Party Data Store (TPDS) Interactive Interface Project will bring all e-Services data over in a real-time environment.
c) Ensuring e-cases are created or updated for all incoming calls – CTI will ensure that e-cases are created or updated for all incoming calls as discussed above.
d) Monitoring and assessing the effect that EHSS downtime may have on the creation of e-cases – EOSS has implemented daily monitoring of system downtime. In addition, we have a hot stand-by system for EHSS that is active and available for use should the production system go down.
e) Reviewing the use of general solutions to determine if a new solution should have been proposed to address the specific issue raised by the customer – The option of "General Solution" has been removed from the database.

IMPLEMENTATION DATE
Develop processes and procedures to ensure management information is complete and accurate – e-help Level 2 assistors will begin conducting e-case reviews by March 15, 2007.

a) Ensuring accuracy of Resolved on First Contact indicator – March 15, 2007.
b) Ensuring customer information is included in the e-case to enable assistor to identify previous customer contacts – January 15, 2008.
c) Ensuring e-cases are created or updated for all incoming calls – January 15, 2008.
d) Monitoring and assessing the effect that EHSS downtime may have on the creation of e-cases – Completed.
e) Reviewing the use of general solutions to determine if a new solution should have been proposed to address the specific issue raised by the customer – Completed.

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL
Director, W&I CAS

5

CORRECTIVE ACTION MONITORING PLAN
We will monitor the corrective actions as part of our internal management control system.

RECOMMENDATION 5
Develop a process to ensure assistors complete required training.

CORRECTIVE ACTION
We agree with this recommendation and have developed a process to ensure assistors complete the required training. We will update IRM 1.4.18, e-help Desk Managers Guide, with the following requirements for managers:

- Submit an annual training plan to EOSS by October 1 each year.
- Notify EOSS of any new training classes not submitted in the initial plan at least one week before the proposed training date.
- Notify EOSS of any changes to the initial plan at least one week before the proposed change.
- Maintain student rosters of all classroom training.
- Verify that all required courses are listed in their employees' training history on the Enterprise Learning Management System (ELMS).

The EOSS will monitor the training plan to completion and will also conduct random samples of employees' training histories in ELMS to ensure training has been conducted.

IMPLEMENTATION DATE
This process was implemented as of October 1, 2006. Updates to the IRM will be finalized by February 15, 2007.

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL
Director, W&I CAS

CORRECTIVE ACTION MONITORING PLAN
We will monitor these corrective actions as part of our internal management control system.

RECOMMENDATION 6
Realign the e-help Desk Program assistors under the Business Strategy/Business Architecture Office.

CORRECTIVE ACTION
We agree with the recommendation and we will realign e-help Desk assistors to EOSS within the CAS organization effective FY 2008. This action will directly align the office

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that establishes policies and procedures with the employees who actually perform the work, and give the EOSS direct authority over the personnel who are responsible for assisting customers.

IMPLEMENTATION DATE
October 15, 2007

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL
Director, W&I CAS

CORRECTIVE ACTION MONITORING PLAN
We will monitor these corrective actions as part of our internal management control system.