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United States General Accounting Office
Washington, DC 20548

January 23, 2003

The Honorable Gordon S. Heddell
Inspector General
Department of Labor

Subject: *Applying Agreed-Upon Procedures: Federal Unemployment Taxes*

Dear Mr. Heddell:

We have performed the procedures contained in the enclosure to this report, which we agreed to perform and with which you concurred, solely to assist your office in ascertaining whether the net federal unemployment tax (FUTA) revenue distributed to the Unemployment Trust Fund (UTF) for the fiscal year ended September 30, 2002, is supported by the underlying records. As agreed with your office, we evaluated fiscal year 2002 activity affecting distributions to the UTF.

In performing the agreed-upon procedures, we conducted our work in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards, which incorporate financial audit and attestation standards established by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants. These standards also provide guidance for performing and reporting the results of agreed-upon procedures.

The adequacy of the procedures to meet your objectives is your responsibility and we make no representation in that respect. The procedures we agreed to perform include (1) detailed tests of transactions that represent the underlying basis of amounts distributed to the UTF and (2) review of key reconciliations of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) records to the Department of the Treasury records. The enclosure contains the agreed-upon procedures and our findings from performing each of the procedures.

We were not engaged to perform, and did not perform, an audit, the objective of which would have been the expression of an opinion on the net amount of FUTA taxes distributed to the UTF. Accordingly, we do not express such an opinion. Had we performed additional procedures, other matters might have come to our attention that would have been reported to you. We completed the agreed-upon procedures on January 10, 2003.

We provided a draft of this report to IRS officials, along with its enclosure, for review and comment. They agreed with the results and findings presented in this report.

This report is intended solely for the use of the Office of Inspector General of the Department of Labor and should not be used by those who have not agreed to the procedures and have not taken responsibility for the sufficiency of the procedures for their purposes. However, this report is a matter of public record and its distribution is not limited. Copies are available to others upon request. This report is also available at no charge on GAO's home page at <http://www.gao.gov>. If you have any questions, please call me at (202) 512-3406.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Steven J. Sebastian".

Steven J. Sebastian
Director
Financial Management and Assurance

Enclosure

Unemployment Trust Fund Procedures and Results

I. Detailed tests of transactions

- A. Obtain from IRS total FUTA collections and refunds reflecting the first 8 months of fiscal year 2002 posted to the master file.¹ Determine if FUTA collections and refund data per the master file materially reconcile to the general ledger.²

Description of findings and results

Total FUTA collections and refunds for the first 8 months of fiscal year 2002 per IRS's master file materially reconciled to IRS's general ledger.

- B. Use dollar unit sampling (DUS) to select a sample of combined FUTA collection and refund transactions from the master file for the first 8 months of fiscal year 2002, using a confidence level of 80 percent, a test materiality of \$341 million, and an expected aggregate error amount of \$102.3 million.

Description of findings and results

Use of DUS with a confidence level of 80 percent, a test materiality of \$341 million, and an expected aggregate error amount of \$102.3 million resulted in a sample of 44 transactions for the first 8 months of fiscal year 2002. Of this total, 43 transactions represented collections and 1 transaction represented refunds.

- C. For each sampled FUTA tax collection transaction:

1. Determine if collection amounts are accurately recorded by tracing collection transaction amounts from IRS's master files to deposit confirmation documents (e.g., federal tax deposit coupons).

Description of findings and results

Based on supporting documentation, collection amounts were accurately recorded for all 43 sampled FUTA collection transactions.

2. Determine if amounts were recorded to the appropriate period by reviewing the date on source documents.

¹The master file is a detailed database containing taxpayer information.

²Except where noted for certain procedures, significant or material is defined as \$341 million. This represents 1 percent of the UTF collections made by federal and state government agencies for fiscal year 2001.

Description of findings and results

Based on supporting documentation, collection amounts were recorded to the appropriate period for all 43 sampled FUTA collection transactions.

3. Determine whether the transactions were properly classified as FUTA receipts by reviewing source documentation maintained in IRS's files (e.g., tax returns).

Description of findings and results

Based on supporting documentation, collection amounts were recorded in the correct tax class³ for all 43 sampled FUTA collection transactions.

4. Confirm FUTA transactions paid via the Electronic Federal Tax Payment System (EFTPS)⁴ to determine whether the recorded transactions are valid and reflect the proper amounts, are applied to the proper tax period, and are properly classified as FUTA receipts.

Description of findings and results

Thirty-six of the 43 sampled FUTA receipt transactions were paid via EFTPS. The bank confirmation showed that all 36 transactions were valid and had been recorded to the proper tax period and tax class and for the proper amounts.

5. Recalculate each tax return to check mathematical accuracy.

Description of findings and results

The two applicable FUTA tax returns⁵ were mathematically correct.

D. For each sampled FUTA tax refund transaction:

1. Confirm sampled FUTA refund transactions with Treasury's Financial Management Service (FMS) by checking that the amount of the refund is correct, and that it was recorded to the appropriate period and tax class.

³IRS assigns a tax class number to specific types of taxes. FUTA taxes are tax class 8.

⁴EFTPS is a system for initiating tax payments electronically. Employers who make federal tax deposits exceeding \$200,000 must use EFTPS to pay their FUTA taxes. The \$200,000 threshold includes all federal tax deposits, such as deposits for employment tax, excise tax, and corporate income tax. Taxpayers who are not required to make electronic deposits may voluntarily participate in EFTPS.

⁵Of the 43 sampled FUTA receipt transactions, only 2 included remittances with tax returns. The remaining 41 transactions were paid via EFTPS or federal tax deposits.

Description of findings and results

For the one sampled FUTA refund transaction, confirmation with Treasury's FMS showed that the amount of the refund was correct and that it was recorded to the appropriate period and tax class.

2. Recalculate each tax return to verify mathematical accuracy.

Description of findings and results

The tax return for the sampled FUTA refund transaction was mathematically correct.

3. For FUTA tax returns, determine whether the taxpayer provided a written explanation for exempt payments, and whether the explanation meets IRS's criteria for FUTA exempt wage payments.

Description of findings and results

For the one sampled FUTA refund transaction, the taxpayer claimed an exempt wage payment and provided a written explanation that met IRS criteria.

4. For manual refunds,⁶ check to see that the appropriate supporting documentation is attached and that individuals who approved the manual refunds were authorized to do so.

Description of findings and results

The one sampled FUTA refund transaction was not a manual refund.

II. Analytical procedures

- A. Perform analytical procedures on FUTA revenue collection and refund data for the period not subject to detailed tests of transactions to determine if reported fiscal year 2002 revenue collections and refunds appear reasonable.

Description of findings and results

We performed a predictive test on the final 4 months of fiscal year 2002 FUTA revenue collection and refund data. The predicted FUTA revenue collection and refund data amounts for the final 4 months of fiscal year 2002

⁶A manual refund is a refund manually processed by an IRS employee rather than through IRS's normal automated process.

did not materially vary from the actual amount of revenue collections and refunds per IRS's records for this period.

III. Other FUTA procedures

- A. For each of the 12 months in fiscal year 2002, obtain and review supporting documentation for monthly revenue reclassification adjustments transmitted by IRS to Treasury's FMS. Check to see that the supporting documentation agrees with the reclassification adjustment transmitted to FMS.

Description of findings and results

Documentation supported the monthly FUTA reclassification adjustment amount transmitted to Treasury's FMS for all 12 months of fiscal year 2002.

- B. For each of the 12 months in fiscal year 2002, obtain and review supporting documentation for the monthly entry of FUTA refund data into the Government Online Accounting Link System (GOALS) to charge back the UTF account for FUTA tax refunds issued. Check to see that the supporting documentation agrees with the monthly entries reported in GOALS.

Description of findings and results

Documentation supported the monthly FUTA refund amount entered in GOALS to charge the UTF for FUTA tax refunds issued for all 12 months of fiscal year 2002.

- C. Compare fiscal year 2002 net FUTA collections per IRS's statement of custodial activity and related footnote disclosures to (1) the Treasury's Bureau of Public Debt (BPD) accounting records for the UTF and (2) drafts of the Department of Labor's (DOL) fiscal year 2002 consolidated financial statements. Obtain explanations/support for material variances.

Description of findings and results

There were no significant variances between net FUTA collections per IRS's statement of custodial activity and BPD's accounting records for the UTF. Similarly, there were no significant variances between IRS's statement of custodial activity and related footnote disclosures and drafts of DOL's fiscal year 2002 consolidated financial statements.

IV. Other procedures performed as part of the fiscal year 2002 IRS financial statement audit

- A. From IRS's master files for the first 8 months of fiscal year 2002, use DUS to select statistical samples of (1) total tax revenue receipts and (2) refunds. For each sample item, test that the collection or refund amount, tax period, and tax class from source documentation agree with the information recorded in the IRS's master files.

Description of findings and results

Detailed testing of 153 revenue receipts and 50 refund sample transactions showed that the collection or refund amount, tax period, and tax class from source documents agreed with the information recorded in the IRS master files.

- B. Review selected IRS campuses' monthly Treasury SF-224 reconciliations to determine if IRS-reported revenue receipts were properly classified and reconciled to Treasury FMS records. For refunds, review selected IRS service centers' monthly Treasury SF-224 reconciliations to determine if IRS-reported total refunds (all tax classes) materially⁷ reconciled to Treasury FMS records.⁸

Description of findings and results

Tax revenue receipts reported by selected IRS service center campuses through the monthly Treasury SF-224 reconciliation process were properly classified and materially agreed with Treasury FMS records.

Total refunds reported by the selected IRS service center campuses through the monthly Treasury SF-224 reconciliation process materially agreed with Treasury FMS records.

- C. Perform procedures to determine whether revenue receipt balances by tax class per the general ledger materially agree with IRS's master files and Treasury records. For refunds, perform a comparison of total refund balances between the master file, the general ledger, and Treasury records. Also, compare FUTA refunds per the master file to the general ledger.

⁷For the purpose of this procedure and procedure IV.C, we define material as \$20 billion. This represents 1 percent of the total tax revenue receipts collected by IRS in fiscal year 2002.

⁸IRS maintains records of refund balances by tax class in its master file, and reports this information monthly to Treasury via the SF-224. Treasury provides IRS with a Statement of Differences (TFS-6652), which reports differences between total refunds reported by IRS on the SF-224 and the total refunds per Treasury records.

Enclosure

Description of findings and results

Tax receipt balances for all tax classes, including FUTA, per IRS's general ledger, materially agreed with IRS's master files and with Treasury records.

Refund balances per IRS's general ledger materially agreed with the master file and with Treasury records.

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