Information for IRS Approved Continuing Education Providers
Provided via conference call January 28 - 31, 2014

Challenges encountered during 2014 CE renewal season

The second Continuing Education (CE) provider renewal season is complete. Improvements implemented last year were successful, but we did encounter a few challenges. Tips and clarifications are listed below. Refer to Exhibit 1 – Example Letter (pages 7 and 8 of this document) as well verify your information on your current approval/renewal letter as you read through these nine items.

1. Make sure your Point of Contact (POC) information is current on your 2014 approval/renewal letter and in your online CE account. The POC information is located at the top left hand corner of the example letter. It is vital that your phone number, address and email address are current in the event we need to reach you. It is also imperative that you notify us of POC changes for your organization. The new POC should contact the CE provider customer support line at (855) 296-3150 to setup his or her own login and password. Ideally, this should be done prior to the current POC leaving.

2. Ensure you are using the correct provider number. On the example letter it is located in Box 1. If you have not been using the correct number, please call the customer support line at (855) 296-3150 to report this issue. Note: If you have already been notified by our CE Vendor, Kinsail, of a change to your provider number, there is no need to call the customer support line.

3. Ensure you program numbers are accurate. On the example letter, refer to the section labeled Box 2:

   a. Remember that the year 12, 13 or 14 (reflected in the twelfth and thirteenth position of the program number) identifies the year the program was created, NOT the year the program can be offered. If you see programs with a 12 or 13 on your letter, that means during the renewal process you checked the "continue using" box. Many providers checked the box to carry over or "retain all" programs during renewal, rather than selecting only the programs you intended to offer in 2014.
   b. Delete any programs that you no longer offer. (Note: Don't delete a program until you have uploaded all PTIN records for it.) It is currently difficult for us to determine an accurate number of programs that are truly available to the preparer community because so many providers retained all programs during renewal.
      i. To delete a program, login to your provider account and scroll down to your listing of 2014 approved programs. Locate the program you wish to delete and click the "delete file" icon in the "Actions" column. The icon looks like a piece of paper with a small red circle in the lower right hand corner. Use care when deleting programs. Since program numbers can look very similar, please take the time to ensure you are deleting the correct program.

ii. If you have been notified that you have been selected for a random program review, please do not delete the program that was selected for review until you have been informed your review is officially closed.

iii. If you didn't have a program ready that you intended to offer in 2014 at the time of renewal you may have created a "place holder program" that you had no intention of offering. Now is the time to delete any placeholder programs.

c. Review your program numbers for duplicates. Sometimes program numbers may look identical, but one is a "12" and one a "13" number, so this can be tricky (see Box 3 of the example letter). If you find program numbers that are EXACTLY the same, please contact the CE Customer Support line at (855) 296-3150.

4. Review your programs' category indicators for accuracy. Box 4 of the example letter shows where the category indicator is located within a program number.

a. A program's category is the sixth character in the program number – you will see an E for Ethics, a T for federal taxation, a U for federal tax update, a P for the Special Enrollment Exam preparation, and Q for an ERPA program. If you have miscategorized a program, you can not edit it. You will need to get a new program number with the correct category and delete the old incorrect program number once you have submitted all PTIN records, if any.

b. If you are offering a Special Enrollment Exam (SEE) test preparation program it should have a P in the sixth position (the P is for preparation). Remember; SEE test preparation programs can only be offered to Other Tax Return Preparers (OTRP) and are limited to 10 hours of federal tax credit.

c. If you offer any programs to Enrolled Retirement Plan Agents (ERPA), the program number should contain a Q in the sixth position (for Qualified Retirement Plan Program). These programs should generally only be offered to ERPAs.

5. Please review your approved program listing to ensure you have selected the appropriate audience type(s) and delivery method(s) for each program. Remember, if you are interested in increasing the number of students who can take your programs, consider offering to both OTRP & EA audience types. You can make this change in your on-line CE Provider account by accessing the program and selecting the additional audience checkbox appropriate for that program. Note: An OTRP audience type shows up as Return Preparer on your approval/renewal letters and the approved program grid of your CE online account home screen.

6. Check for incomplete program numbers. Refer to Box 5 on the example letter. Program numbers should ALWAYS contain 14 characters. If you find that your organization has any incomplete program numbers, please contact the CE provider customer support line at (855) 296-3150.

7. Pay attention to your approval/renewal letter. When you make changes to your programs, your letter will change as well. The letter regenerates or updates as you make changes to program information in your account. The original delivery date of the letter will stay the same in your secure mailbox (date of approval or renewal), but when you open the letter it

will have the update(s) to program information and will include the actual date each program was approved.

8. Describe programs in detail. The same descriptions are too often used for multiple programs. DO NOT use the same generic description for multiple programs, but rather describe the program being offered in detail. There are sample program descriptions located on www.irs.gov/taxpros/ce.

9. Contact the CE provider customer support line at (855) 296-3150 any time you need assistance verifying or correcting any of your information.

Providers' PTIN upload requirements

IRS CE providers are required to upload program completion information for participants with a PTIN regardless of the participant's designation according to CE Provider Standard 14. When you signed the jurat to become or renew as a CE provider, you agreed to that requirement. If a participant reports their PTIN to you, you are required to submit their program completion information.

When you upload program completion information, the file goes through a verification process and is transmitted to the PTIN system. Generally, preparers should see the CE record in their PTIN account in approximately 48 - 72 hours, excluding weekends.

Carefully monitor the Excel files you have uploaded and take timely actions to ensure files are submitted successfully. Look for rejected records that you need to fix and resubmit. As a reminder, when a record is rejected, the entire file is rejected. You can remove the records with the errors and resubmit the good records, and then correct the rejected records and resubmit them in a separate spreadsheet. If the PTIN holder provides corrected information and it is outside of the quarterly due date, providers should upload the information whenever it becomes available. If you have a small number of corrected records to resubmit, you can do this in the manual mode, which will instantly let you know if the record is successfully uploaded or if there is an error.

Please remember that you are required to submit your program completion information quarterly at a minimum (by March 31, June 30, and September 30). During the fourth quarter (October 1 – December 31), you must report program completion information within ten business days of delivery of each program. However, you may submit records more frequently, if you wish. If you have PTIN records for 2013 that you have not submitted yet, please do so immediately.

As many of you know, the PTIN holder can now see their CE records in their PTIN account for any programs completed January 1, 2013 or after. These PTIN holders expect to see their records in their PTIN accounts, regardless of whether it is required or voluntary. Many providers have been contacted by their students because they did not see their CE records in their PTIN account. If you get a call from a student, first you should ensure that you successfully uploaded their record and no further action is required on your part. It is very important for you to name

your Excel PTIN reporting files appropriately, so you can easily locate and identify the records you have submitted. If you properly submitted the CE record and had no file errors, then you should contact the customer support line at (855) 296-3150 so we can research/resolve the issue. The customer support line will need to know the name of the file that was submitted and the name of the student.

If you know you have reported incorrect CE records, there are two solutions, depending on the error.

     1. If you mistakenly submitted a record giving a participant the wrong number of credit hours, but all other information is correct, simply submit another record with the correct credit hours and it will overwrite the incorrect information. Note: You cannot enter zero or a negative credit hour to correct a record. All other fields, with the exception of the CE hours, must match the original submission.

     2. If you have submitted any other incorrect record such as wrong program number, wrong participant, etc. you need to contact the customer support line at (855) 296-3150 and provide detailed information about what records need to be corrected and you will be notified once that has been completed.

You have heard us say many times, if a program participant gives you their PTIN, you need to report it, regardless of their designation. CPAs, attorneys, as well as EAs and OTRPs expect to see their continuing education in their PTIN accounts. To help you get a good picture of the number of PTIN holders and how many are credentialed, here is the latest breakdown of individuals as of December 31, 2013:

Number of Individuals with Current Preparer Tax Identification Numbers (PTINs) for 2013	743,331
Professional Credentials‡	
Attorneys	**33,349**
Certified Public Accountants	**223,320**
Enrolled Actuaries	**506**
Enrolled Agents	**50,635**
Enrolled Retirement Plan Agents	**738**
Other Categories	
Supervised Preparers*	**65,907**
Non-1040 Preparers*	**54,440**

<u>The importance of correctly categorizing CE programs</u>

Programs must have unique program numbers identifying federal tax, federal tax update or ethics in order for proper CE credits to be given in the correct category. For example, a federal tax update program must provide a practical working knowledge of the latest legislative tax law changes and associated IRS forms, instructions and publications.

The following is an example of a federal tax program should entail. First of all, if you are only adjusting inflationary amounts in a currently offered program, there is no need to get a new program number for a federal tax program because there are no "content" changes and it should not be classified as a federal tax update program. If you have content changes beyond inflationary amounts, regardless of program category, you must get a new program number.

If you are going to offer an entire program directed at legislative changes for a particular tax year, then that would be a federal tax update. An update program typically has the majority of its focus around the changes in law regarding the upcoming tax year and, possibly, future tax years and would normally take place in the fall and/or the start of the new tax season, depending on the timing of the changes. Because federal tax update material would be different every fall, you must obtain a new program number each year you offer a tax update.

While enrolled agents do not currently have a requirement for federal tax law updates, we recommend that tax update programs developed for enrolled agents be categorized as a federal tax update program rather than as federal taxation. It is our experience that often times enrolled agents may be looking specifically for a federal tax update program and proper categorization provides better communications to the enrolled agents considering your programs.

Hot Topics

Provider/Program Review Information

The CE Review Team continues to conduct reviews of randomly selected providers. We expect providers to have all program materials, evaluations, certificates of completion and other documentation available in electronic format. In the event you are selected for review, we would expect all documentation requested for the review to be uploaded into your online CE provider account. Currently, you are able to upload documents up to 10 MB in a single upload. If necessary, you can upload multiple files. If your program material is only available in hard copy text or the program material is in electronic format that exceeds 10 MB, the materials can be mailed, or shipped by FedEx or UPS. However, it is our expectation that all other requested materials (evaluations, certificates of completion, etc.) be scanned, organized, clearly named and uploaded into your online CE provider account. Please be aware any material shipped to us will not be returned at the conclusion of the review, as it will be associated with the review file.

In conducting the reviews, we have also noted incidents where preparer PTINs are appearing on sign-in sheets and certificates of completion, in addition to the participant's name. Although there is no specific requirement not to display the PTIN on these documents, we once again share with you that we have received feedback from some preparers voicing their concern of PTIN disclosure at CPE events and the potential for identity theft. We will leave it up to you to act on
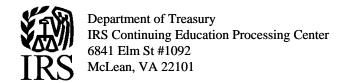
this information as you see fit, but it is our recommendation that PTINs not be displayed on any documentation that can be viewed by others in attendance at your in-person programs.

Finally, a reminder that for a program to qualify for IRS CE credit, it must provide practical working knowledge of federal tax law, federal tax law changes, or ethics. Programs dealing with general information about social security, e-services, state tax, non-tax software and business management DO NOT qualify. Programs must address federal tax related matters.

Closing

- If you have suggestions/comments, please send your feedback to rpo.ce@irs.gov.
- If you would like to be part of some small focus groups to discuss the annual renewal process, please send us an e-mail to rpo.ce@irs.gov letting us know of your interest so we can begin setting up some of those small discussion groups.
- Please remember to call the CE provider customer support line at (855) 296-3150, with any technical questions.
- .

Department of Treasury
IRS Continuing Education Processing Center
6841 Elm St #1092
McLean, VA 22101

Letter	Renewal Approved 4866-R
Letter Date	01/28/2014
To contact us	1-855-296-3150
	Hours 8 a.m.-8 p.m. ET
Page 1	

Letter should have current Point of Contact's information.

POINT O. CONTACT
444 ANY STREET
CITY, ST 00000

You Successfully Renewed Your IRS Continuing Education Provider Status

Congratulations! You renewed your organization's status as an IRS-approved continuing education provider. Your organization will appear on IRS' approved continuing education provider listing at www.irs.gov/taxpros/ce.

Your information

Organization's name Shannon's Super Tax Education Services

Provider's number   ABCDE

1. Is this the provider number you have been using?

What you need to do

- Follow the rules for continuing education providers (as described in sections 10.6 and 10.9 of Department of Treasury's Circular 230 and in other IRS guidance, forms, and instructions).
- Use the program numbers below on any certificates you issue to tax return preparers who complete your program successfully.
- **Collect the name and PTIN from each attendee for each program in order for them to receive IRS credit.** Program information by PTIN must be provided to the IRS as prescribed in instructions from the Return Preparer Office.
- **Don't** transfer, assign, or sell your provider number to any other organization.
- Allow the IRS Return Preparer Office to review your records upon request.
- Renew your provider status yearly during the open season period (October – December). Your current number is valid until December 31, 2014.

You may use the IRS approved continuing education provider logo for 2014. We sent this logo to you via secure email.

Letter 4866-R (9-2012)
Catalog #60082S

Department of Treasury	**Letter**	Renewal Approved 4866-R
IRS Continuing Education Processing Center	**Letter Date**	
6841 Elm St #1092	**To contact us**	1-855-296-3150
McLean, VA 22101		Hours 8 a.m.-8 p.m. ET
	Page 2	

Additional information

- Visit www.irs.gov/taxpros/ce
- For tax forms, instructions, and publications, visit www.irs.gov or call 1-800-TAX-FORM (1-800-829-3676).
- Keep this notice for your records and use your provider number in any correspondence with the IRS.

If you need assistance, please don't hesitate to contact us.

2. Table of currently approved programs.

NOTE: You must use your program number on any certificate you issue to tax preparers.

3. Note: The only difference in the program numbers is the year.

4. Category Indicator – (E) Ethics, (T) Fed Tax, (U) Tax Update, (P) SEE Test Prep and (Q) ERPA

5. This is an example of an incomplete program number.

You Are Approved To Offer The Following Programs

	Program Number	Credit Hours	Approved Audience	Approved Delivery Method	Date Program was Approved
Ethics – Doing the Right Thing	ABCDE-E-00001-12-S	2	Return Preparers/Enrolled Agents	Self-study	11/15/2013
Ethics – Doing the Right Thing	ABCDE-E-00001-13-S	2	Return Preparers/Enrolled Agents	Self-study	11/15/2013
EITC Due Diligence	ABCDE-T-00002-13-I	1		In Person	09/24/2013
2013 Federal Tax Law Changes	ABCDE-U-00622-13-O	3	Return Preparers/Enrolled Agents	Online/Group	01/02/2014
Filing Season Update	ABCDE - - 14-I	3	Return Preparers/Enrolled	In Person	01/22/2014