



**IRS
Modernized e-File (MeF)
Service Request Guidance
for
Software Developers/Transmitters and States**

Final

Version 1.0

August 30, 2012

INTRODUCTION:

One of the most significant improvements MeF offers over its predecessor is the rapid processing of receipts and acknowledgements. Although receipt and acknowledgement generation depend on system load, MeF is engineered to adhere to expected response times as long as all transmitters follow the guidance provided in this document.

Most submissions will be receipted to the transmitter in two minutes or less.

-- During non-peak filing periods, customers can expect most acknowledgements to generate within 5 minutes of receipt of submissions.

-- During peak filing periods, customers can expect most acknowledgements to generate within two hours of receipt of submissions.

-- This is a great improvement over the previous system but achieving these results depends on all transmitters using this shared environment as described in this document.

Transmitters

Retrieving Acknowledgements

MeF strongly **recommends** all transmitters use the **Get Acks service** and not the Get New Acks service. Get Acks is the most efficient service in the family of Get Acknowledgement requests because it supplies MeF the submission ids of the acknowledgements. Get Acks can be run in multiple sessions using the same ETIN with no reduction in efficiency.

We have noticed a number of transmitters executing this request within seconds of transmitting submissions. There are instances of up to 85% of Get Acks returning no acknowledgements because the submissions are still being processed. It is in everyone's best interest to reduce the number of requests that return no acknowledgements to 10% - 15% of all acknowledgement requests. Therefore the following guidance is being distributed to all trading partners.

Transmitters should take into account the response times mentioned above when retrieving acknowledgements:

(1) Federal Acknowledgements

- (a) Wait at least two minutes (non-peak) and longer (peak) after transmission of submissions to retrieve federal acknowledgements.
- (b) Keep retrieving acknowledgements until you encounter a request that returns no acknowledgements.
- (c) Once you encounter a request that returns no acknowledgements wait two minutes before attempting to retrieve again.
- (d) Add 30 seconds between requests until a 5 minute interval is reached.
- (e) Continue requesting acknowledgements at 5 minutes intervals.
- (f) At any time during this process, (c) through (e), once acknowledgements are returned continue retrieving them until you encounter a request that does not return any.
- (g) Then repeat the process of increasing intervals.

(2) Do not request acknowledgements for federal returns once all acknowledgements have been retrieved.

Requesting acknowledgements when you have already retrieved them all is a waste of system resources and is something the IRS will be paying close attention to.

(3) State Acknowledgements

- (a) **Wait 12 to 24 hours to retrieve an acknowledgement for a state return.**

- (b) States must retrieve state returns from MeF, process the returns, and return the state acknowledgement to MeF.
- (c) This process takes much longer to complete than for federal returns.
- (d) Transmitters should not be treating federal and state acknowledgement retrievals alike.

(4) Don't Keep Requesting the same State Acknowledgement

- (a) If after 24 or 48 hours you have still not received a state acknowledgement cease attempting to retrieve it.
- (b) Request its status using Get Submissions Status.
- (c) If the most recent status is "Received" call the e-file help desk.
- (d) If the most recent status is "Ready for Pickup," the state has not retrieved the state return. Call the state and tell them to retrieve the returns. Give them the submission ids.
- (e) If the most recent status is "Sent to State," the state attempted to retrieve the returns but may have had problems doing so. Call the state and supply them the submission ids. Have them retrieve using the Get Submissions service instead of Get New Submissions.
- (f) See Publication 4164 for a complete list of statuses.

(5) Separate Federal and State Acknowledgement Retrievals

- (a) Because of different turnaround times for federal and state acknowledgements, federal acknowledgements retrievals should be separated from state acknowledgement retrievals.
- (b) Consider creating separate sessions for retrieving federal and state acknowledgements.
- (c) If you chose to use one session for both, still separate federal acknowledgement retrievals from state acknowledgement retrievals. **Do not retrieve federal and state acknowledgements in the same request.**
- (d) Separating them empowers transmitters to vary the time interval between requests separately for federal and state acknowledgements.
- (e) It also empowers transmitters to turn one off one when all acknowledgements have been retrieved while continuing to request the other.

If you are using **Get New Acknowledgments** in addition to the above guidance, please follow these additional rules:

- (6) Look at the More Available flag in the SOAP body of the response.
- (7) As long as the flag is set to true, loop around and keep retrieving until the flag is set to false.
- (8) Once the flag is set to false follow the procedures outlined in (1) above.

States

Retrieving Submissions

Because states do not normally know the submission ids of state submissions, states use the Get New Submissions service to retrieve submissions.

1. State submissions are batched into files each hour for each state.
2. Each file contains up to the configurable number of returns identified by the state prior to start-up or 100 if the state has not provided a number (200 starting in January 2013).
3. Separate files are created for each submission category (Corp, Part, EO, and Ind).
4. State submissions are not available using this service until they are batched into files. This means you cannot pull the submission as soon as the transmitters send it to MeF. You must wait for it to be batched.
5. Please refer to the batch file creation schedule at the end of this document for the times every hour each state's submissions are batched.
6. Wait 10 minutes after your scheduled batch creation time to retrieve returns. This ensures the files have been created prior to retrieving.
7. Key off the "More Available" flag in the body of the SOAP response to determine if additional files exist for retrieval.
8. As long as the More Available flag is set to 'true' keep retrieving submission files.
9. Once the More Available flag is set to false cease retrieving returns.
10. Additional returns will not be available for retrieval until the next hour.
11. Once the flag is set to false, do not attempt to retrieve additional submissions using this service. To do so is to waste system resources. Wait until 10 minutes after your scheduled time next hour.
12. To prevent backlogs each state should retrieve all files each hour.
13. Since returns are batched once an hour no state should need to use multiple parallel sessions to retrieve available returns unless they cannot retrieve all of them within the hour.
14. If multiple sessions are needed we recommend you retrieve using a different submission category in each session (Corp, Part, EO, and Ind).
15. However, if not all submissions in a category can be retrieved within the hour, and then multiple sessions should be used for the same category.

Proper Use of Get Submissions By Msg ID

1. This is important yet underutilized state service.
2. When a **Get New Submissions** results in a timeout, or the response is not received or is lost after retrieval, the submissions cannot be retrieved using a second Get New Submissions.
3. Use **Get Submissions By Msg Id** to retrieve submissions that were not received or were received but lost.
4. When using Get Submissions By Msg ID place the message id of the Get New Submissions – the one for which the response was lost or not received -- in the appropriate element in the SOAP body of the Get Submissions By Msg Id request.
5. MeF will return the attachment (submissions) originally attached to the Get New Submissions Response. You can then process the submissions.
6. By running Get Submissions By Msg Id every time a Get New Submissions response is lost or not received, states can retrieve all outstanding submissions.

7. **It is imperative states retain the message ids** of their service requests, especially their Get New Submissions service requests, so they can be reused when necessary.
8. **Do not use the Reconciliation List/Get Submissions service combo** to identify and retrieve submissions lost when executing Get New Submissions. Get Submissions Reconciliation List was not designed for this purpose and Get Submissions is an inefficient way to retrieve many submissions.

Proper Use of Get Submission Reconciliation List

1. Most states misuse this request.
2. The Reconciliation List/Get Submissions service combo should not be used to identify and retrieve submissions lost when using Get New Submissions. Use Get Submissions By Msg ID to re-retrieve those submissions.
3. However, states should still run Reconciliation List regularly to identify any outstanding submissions – those that might have fallen through the cracks.
4. Any submissions appearing on the reconciliation list will continue to appear on it until they are retrieved and receipted.
5. **Note: Even when the more available flag is set to true, you will continue to retrieve the same submission ids (and not the next ones) until the submissions on the list are retrieved and receipted.**
6. Therefore we recommend states execute Reconciliation as follows:

```
Repeat
  Get Submission Reconciliation List
  If list not empty
    Get Submissions
    Store Submissions
    Send Receipts
  Endlf
Until More Available Flag = False
```

7. The above algorithm returns a list of submissions and the submissions are retrieved, stored, and receipted. The next call to Reconciliation list returns a new set of submissions. This repeats until there are no more submissions that meet the criteria.

Get Submissions:

1. Get Submissions pulls submissions directly from the MeF database.
2. Because submissions are stored as clobs in the database, retrieval is inefficient.
3. This is another reason why states should not use the Reconciliation List/Get Submissions service combo as their main method of retrieving submissions that Get New Submissions failed to retrieve.

Service (SOAP) Responses

1. Each service request returns a response.

2. It is the state's (and transmitter's) responsibility to check each response and determine if it was successful or failed.
3. For example, a SOAP fault response to a login request means the login was unsuccessful.
4. Additional examples: A SOAP fault in response to Send Receipts or Send Acknowledgements means the receipts and/or acknowledgements were not accepted by MeF.
5. The response also contains error messages (Fault strings) that often give specific information about the cause of the error. For example, a Send Receipts service may have failed because the format of the timestamp in the receipt was invalid.
6. States (and transmitters) should save the message ids of SOAP Faults and provide them to IRS when seeking assistance in remedying the problem.

State Schedule for Creating Submission Batch Files

State	Submission Categories for ATS	Submission Categories for Production	Schedule
Alabama	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	30 minutes past the hour
Arizona	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	0 minutes past the hour
Arkansas	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	50 minutes past the hour
California	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	30 minutes past the hour
Colorado	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	10 minutes past the hour
Connecticut	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	20 minutes past the hour
Delaware	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	30 minutes past the hour
District of Columbia	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	40 minutes past the hour
Florida	Corp, Part, EO	Corp, Part, EO	0 minutes past the hour
Georgia	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	20 minutes past the hour
Hawaii	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	40 minutes past the hour
Idaho	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	10 minutes past the hour
Illinois	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	40 minutes past the hour
Indiana	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	50 minutes past the hour
Iowa	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	30 minutes past the hour
Kansas	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	0 minutes past the hour
Kentucky	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	50 minutes past the hour
Louisiana	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	40 minutes past the hour
Maine	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	20 minutes past the hour
Maryland	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	20 minutes past the hour
Massachusetts	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	20 minutes past the hour
Michigan	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	10 minutes past the hour
Minnesota	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	40 minutes past the hour
Mississippi	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	0 minutes past the hour
Missouri	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	40 minutes past the hour
Montana	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	10 minutes past the hour
Nebraska	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	20 minutes past the hour
New Hampshire	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	30 minutes past the hour
New Jersey	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	50 minutes past the hour
New Mexico	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	10 minutes past the hour
New York State	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	0 minutes past the hour
New York City	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	50 minutes past the hour
North Carolina	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	50 minutes past the hour
North Dakota	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	20 minutes past the hour
Ohio	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	40 minutes past the hour
Oklahoma	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	10 minutes past the hour
Oregon	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	20 minutes past the hour
Pennsylvania	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	30 minutes past the hour
Rhode Island	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	50 minutes past the hour
South Carolina	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	10 minutes past the hour
Tennessee	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	0 minutes past the hour
Utah	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	30 minutes past the hour
Vermont	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	10 minutes past the hour
Virginia	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	30 minutes past the hour

State	Submission Categories for ATS	Submission Categories for Production	Schedule
West Virginia	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	0 minutes past the hour
Wisconsin	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	Corp, Part, EO, Ind	40 minutes past the hour