



Tax Examiner

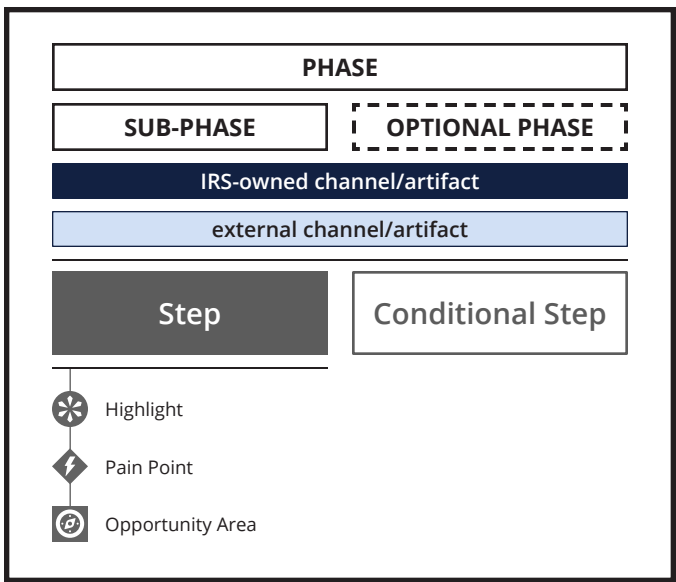
Error Resolution Journey Map

The journey of the **Tax Examiner (TE)** provides a glimpse into the backstage processes pertaining to tax returns that contain one or more errors. This map includes nine steps which are grouped into four phases: *Review*, *Correct/Suspend*, *Correspond*, and *Resolve*.

The *ERS Processing* phase lists steps taken by TEs as they work through the ERS inventory, correcting mistakes made by taxpayers, tax preparers and IRS Data Transcribers. Tax returns that are missing required documents may be suspended. In the *Error Resolution* phase, TEs input command codes into IRS systems (e.g., Integrated Data Retrieval System (IDRS)) which trigger letters and notices to be sent out to taxpayers. Upon receiving taxpayer replies via mail or fax, adjustments and corrections are made.

This journey begins with a “batch” of tax returns that have been received, reviewed, coded and transcribed (for paper returns), and identified as having errors. Batches of returns are sent to ERS and reviewed by teams of TEs.

VISUAL KEY



PHASES

| ERS PROCESSING | | ERROR RESOLUTION | |
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| REVIEW | CORRECT/SUSPEND | CORRESPOND | RESOLVE |

CHANNELS/ ARTIFACTS

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| Internal Revenue Manual (IRM) | | | |
| Integrated Data Retrieval System (IDRS) | | | |
| Integrated Automation Technologies (IAT) | | | |
| Document Locator Number (DLN) | | | |
| Employee User Portal (EUP) | | 12C letter (taxpayer) | Remittance Transaction Research (RTR) System |
| paper tax return | | taxpayer notice (taxpayer) | |
| job aides | | 12C letter (master) | supporting documents (taxpayer) |
| | | Taxpayer Notice Code (TPNC) | |

STEPS

| Review batch/ error report | Review individual tax returns | Correct simple errors | Suspend returns with missing information | Input pertinent information into system(s) | Issue notice/letter to taxpayer | Receive taxpayer's reply | Process taxpayer's reply | Resolve error(s) |
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HIGHLIGHTS/ DETAILS

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| <p>✳ Batching allows Tax Examiners to focus on their job, breaking work into manageable pieces and ensuring all errors are addressed in each batch.</p> <p><i>"I'm not gonna flip through and look at every paper [return]... The batch that I'm working [has a specific amount of errors and I'll go in and resolve those errors." -Lead Tax Examiner, ERS</i></p> <p>✳ Document Locator Numbers (DLNs) are assigned to each batch of returns (50 for paper, 100 for electronic), making it easier for TEs to track their work for the day.</p> <p><i>"If [returns] fall out to ERS, the TE will pull that bundle of work and there's a Document Locator Number that's assigned to each bundle." -P&A Analyst, ERS</i></p> | <p>✳ Tax Examiners review electronic and paper tax returns to check for math, consistency, and field errors, serving as the first line of defense after Data Transcription.</p> <p><i>"One of the easiest parts of our job is checking that things were transcribed where they were supposed to be. It is one of the more tedious things that we have to do." -Lead Tax Examiner, ERS</i></p> <p>✳ TEs quickly correct simple errors to clear inventory and continue processing the taxpayer's return.</p> <p><i>"So, it's just actually... changing it to [what] it should be, per the [tax] form, to get the document to close out." -P&A Analyst, ERS</i></p> <p>✳ Errors contained within electronic returns are easier to correct as there are fewer types of errors that appear.</p> <p><i>"The electronic returns... don't have as much human error. They can still have math errors or things that just don't line up the same way. But you're not dealing with as many issues that are created [by] other people potentially messing up." -Rejects Manager, ERS</i></p> | <p>✳ IRMs provide guidance about where to transfer returns that must be suspended.</p> <p><i>"There's a certain IRM instruction, 'If it meets these criteria... send it over to Statute & Control so that they can review it and make sure that it's within [their rules].'" -Lead Tax Examiner, ERS</i></p> <p>✳ For corrected returns, TEs input Taxpayer Notice Codes (TPNCs) into IDRS, prompting the system to issue a notice to the taxpayer.</p> <p><i>"...our system would tell them to issue what we call a 'Taxpayer Notice Code,' that would adjust the figure to what the IRS says it should be." -P&A Analyst, ERS</i></p> | <p>✳ Mailed letters and notices allow TEs to relay critical information to taxpayers regarding the processing of their tax return.</p> <p>✳ Direct fax numbers and mailing addresses provided on the 12C letter help taxpayers return missing information to the correct ERS address.</p> | <p>✳ ERS may receive taxpayer replies via fax (or e-fax), or through the mail.</p> <p>✳ ERS may receive taxpayer replies via fax from CSRs.</p> <p><i>"And so, we're basically looking for the information from the taxpayer to get it to ERS. That's what we're doing. So as long as their fax machine is workin' and available, we can fax it." -Lead Contact Representative</i></p> | <p>✳ If TEs receive a taxpayer's reply with the supporting documentation before the allotted time frame has elapsed in ERS suspense (i.e., 40 business days), they make the appropriate updates and continue processing the return.</p> <p>✳ Suspended returns that have exceeded the ERS time frame (i.e., 40 business days) without a sufficient taxpayer reply are processed as-is, labeled as a math error, and cleared from ERS inventory.</p> <p><i>"If ERS does not receive any information back, they will move the return out of ERS and through processing... and we can move on from there." -Lead, CER</i></p> |
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PAIN POINTS

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| <p>⚡ Unnecessary errors created by Data Transcribers who transpose data incorrectly increases the ERS inventory.</p> <p><i>"So, while the taxpayer makes those mistakes themselves, we also [make] mistakes... human error. It does happen." -Lead Tax Examiner, ERS</i></p> <p>⚡ As they work through different batches, TEs must ensure they don't miss critical details.</p> <p><i>"Depending on what program they are [in], they may have different rules. For example, we bundle all of our current year domestic returns together... they get bundled differently because different years have different tax laws." -Tech Advisor, ICO</i></p> | <p>⚡ Paper returns may contain a wide variety of errors, requiring Tax Examiners to search thoroughly to identify the issue(s).</p> <p><i>"Each time you open up a paper batch, you never know what you're gonna see. It's definitely a bigger variety of problems." -Rejects Manager, ERS</i></p> | <p>⚡ TEs suspend the case if a taxpayer's return is missing critical information that prevents it from being processed as intended.</p> <p><i>"We've looked at the return and decided that they needed to give us something more, that we can't figure it out for them because we don't have the information... we correspond, we ask 'em for more. And we put it in suspense while we're waiting for the reply." -Tech Advisor, ICO</i></p> <p>⚡ TEs do not correct a return if they are unsure about the taxpayer's intentions.</p> <p><i>"The biggest reason they go into suspense is [when] we're corresponding with the taxpayer... or we don't have the authority to figure it out for them." -Tech Advisor, ICO</i></p> | <p>⚡ TEs often struggle to define the issue(s) with unique cases, utilizing open paragraphs when necessary to input details regarding the error.</p> <p>⚡ ERS is dependent upon a single mailed document (i.e., 12C letter) to communicate critical information about errors to taxpayers.</p> <p><i>"The letters that we send out to the taxpayers are extremely confusing. And, if we need more than one thing, we can't correspond a second time; we can't ask the taxpayer for additional information, 'cause then it's like, badgering [them]." -Rejects Manager, ERS</i></p> <p>⚡ In rare instances, ERS may need to reissue a 12C letter (e.g., receiving Form 4442).</p> <p><i>"So, if we do a referral to ERS, then we're telling [the taxpayer], 'Alright, we're submitting a referral [to] reissue the letter to you. You should receive it within eight weeks. If you don't receive it within eight weeks then call us.'" -CSR</i></p> | <p>⚡ If fax servers go down, ERS may be unable to receive taxpayer replies, delaying processing.</p> <p><i>"If for some reason, the fax doesn't go through... There was a time where [the] ERS fax servers would either not work... they would just get overloaded, and your fax wouldn't go through." -CSR</i></p> | <p>⚡ Adjusting paper returns requires more work from both TEs and clerks to locate the case and attach supporting documentation.</p> |
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OPPORTUNITY AREAS

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| <p>🔍 Minimizing the number of unnecessary errors created during data transcription would reduce ERS inventory.</p> | <p>🔍 Increasing transparency about the issue(s) with a tax return could help taxpayers better understand what's required of them, reducing the need to call the IRS for answers while also helping CSRs to better assist callers requesting additional clarification.</p> | <p>🔍 Enabling taxpayers to designate their preferred communication channels (i.e., paper or digital) could increase the chances of taxpayers reading and responding to requests for additional information.</p> | <p>🔍 Communicating quickly with taxpayers through digital channels about an error on their tax return may help ERS get the information they need sooner than waiting for a mailed letter to be received.</p> <p>🔍 Providing a reliable way to electronically send taxpayer replies to ERS would increase traceability and reduce paper waste and associated costs.</p> <p><i>"Plus, it saves paperwork. Electronic forms are a little easier to work with than printed forms. I like paper, but I've gotten [used to] electronic. And I think it would help streamline the process..." -CSR</i></p> |
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