

Using Survey Information to Provide Evaluative Citizen Feedback for Public Service Decisions

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Abstract

Public opinion polls or surveys of public opinion are used across the world for many reasons, from estimating election results to citizen report cards. While survey results are reported and shared with the public, they are also used to help make policy decisions about public service delivery. This paper focuses on the use of performance information obtained from citizens to help make decisions about resource allocations and improving service delivery. Special challenges in conducting surveys and uses of survey-based performance indicators are presented. Performance data have little value and remain underutilized if nothing is done with the information. Survey results give information on what is working and what is not. The cost of not getting this feedback and evaluating how services affect citizens far outweighs the cost of conducting surveys.



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1. Introduction

Public opinion polls are defined as a survey of public opinion from a specific sample that is usually designed to be representative of the opinions of the population. Surveys have been used to obtain information from the public for decades, with some accounts of the earliest scientific based-survey being done by Gallup in 1936. Since then, surveys have been used for many purposes. This paper focuses on the use of survey information obtained from citizens to help make decisions about public service delivery.

In recent years, many national and local governments around the world have been pressed to measure and report the results of their services. This measurement is intended to make government agencies more accountable and to provide information to government managers for improving the effectiveness of their services. Surveys of citizens have become a major data collection tool for obtaining evaluative data on the quality and effectiveness of public programs. They have become widely used in many countries both (a) to evaluate specific public programs in special studies (called “program evaluations”), and (b) to provide regular information for performance measurement systems used as part of “managing for results” (also called “results-based management” or even “performance-based budgeting systems”).

Benefits of Conducting Surveys. Surveys of citizens (and of the customers of public services) are often the only technique available to obtain accurate data for certain outcomes (results) of services. Such surveys have become popular tools for obtaining data from citizens include focus group discussions and tracking citizen complaints. Though useful, focus group discussions and complaints do not provide public officials with data that are likely to be sufficiently representative of the population. Many people will not know how to complain to the government, may fear retaliation, do not want anything to do with the government, or may not feel it would do any good to complain. Exhibit 1 provides a list of the many types of information that government agencies, or nongovernmental organizations can get from surveys.

¹ Urban Institute Center on Development and Governance, 2100 M Street NW, Washington, DC 20037. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Second International Conference on Public Opinion Polls Public Opinion Polls in a Changing Society, Cairo, Egypt, November 8–10 2009.



Exhibit 1
Information Obtainable from Surveys

Satisfaction with the quality of service provision

- Service quality, timeliness, accessibility
- Facility convenience and condition—location, safety, hours of operation
- Staff quality, accessibility, pleasantness, courtesy
- Overall satisfaction with the services provided
- If citizens would recommend the service to others

Results/benefits realized by customers at the conclusion of services or at some time after leaving the service

- Indication of citizens' behavior or condition, for example, getting well after seeing a doctor and taking medication, or symptoms of illness after a major gastroenteritis or flu outbreak
- Citizens' perceptions of service benefits and results

Information to help explain client ratings

- Citizen opinions and preferences on service delivery
- Reasons for any poor ratings
- Suggestions for service improvements
- Service characteristics such as the amount or type of service received
- Demographic characteristics of citizens

Source: Adapted from Abravanel (2003).

Despite their benefits, government programs and agencies are reluctant to conduct surveys, with reasons shown in Exhibit 2 usually being cited. Of these, the costs associated with conducting the survey are the most common. However, techniques exist to keep costs down. These will be briefly discussed later.

Who Might Be Surveyed? The primary interviewees to evaluate services are the citizens who are the customers/clients of the service. A second option is to survey service providers, which may include government, businesses, or nongovernmental organizations. For example, the national government can survey local governments to obtain feedback on the quality of the guidance and assistance provided by the national government. This would provide useful information to the national government for improving its services. Such surveys can be very inexpensive, especially if they are done through the internet or based on templates filled by local governments in their regular reporting to the national government. Such surveys can also seek feedback on government services from businesses since they are affected by many public activities (both services and regulatory activities).

Exhibit 2
Reasons to Undertake Surveys

Why Organizations Hesitate

Reasons to Undertake Surveys

Limited resources (staff, time, money)	Information obtained from surveys can help you use resources more efficiently by identifying programs that are not efficient or effective.
Other priorities or concerns	Survey data can help you prioritize your services and investment policies based on the preferences and feedback provided by your citizens.
Appropriate survey design is too complex or sophisticated for our staff to undertake at this time	Correct sample and questionnaire design are critical in getting a statistically representative data and the right responses to questions. The wording of the questionnaire and in some cases multiple questions addressing the same issue are necessary to get the correct answers. However, most countries have statistical institutions that can help with the former and training on questionnaire design can quickly build up skills in this area. Also, sophisticated survey procedures are not always needed.
Fear of reprisal from regional or national government based on performance revealed by the survey	Performance information revealed by a survey can be used as a benchmark or baseline to show positive and improved results in the future.
Fear of a “report card” or evaluation	Survey results can be used not only to identify problem areas, but to provide appropriate commendations or rewards to staff when the data show major improvements or maintenance of prior service levels in the face of adverse external factors. Also, knowing the current status of service delivery and having clear targets to aim for can be very motivating for the service provider.
There is only one provider of the service who does not face any competition	Even in the absence of competition, survey information can lead to more efficient use of limited resources, improve service delivery, and develop a better relationship with citizens—all of which are key to holding an elected office.
Low view of the literacy and intelligence of the average citizen	Even with high illiteracy levels, citizens are the consumers of public services and their feedback and evaluation can be used to make service delivery more efficient.

Source: Adapted from Nayyar-Stone et al. (2002).

For surveys of citizens, two kinds of surveys can be used: (1) A “household” survey that includes representative samples of all potential customers, irrespective of whether or not they have actually used the services about which they will be asked; and (2) A “user” survey that surveys only the customers that actually used the service. (User surveys are also called “customer” or “client” surveys.) User surveys might be able to seek responses from all customers rather than only a representative sample.



Major advantages of household surveys are that they can obtain information about several services simultaneously. In this case, the cost can be shared across several agencies (since they are usually centrally administered). Another major advantage is that they can obtain information from both users and non-users of a service. They can obtain information from citizens that have not used the service and seek information as to the reasons the service was not used. Exhibit 3 is an example of such a question—about non-use of public buses.

Exhibit 3

Example of a Question Asking for Reasons for Non-Use of a Public Service

Please tell me the most important reason why you do not ride public buses:

- Service not frequent enough
- Bus stop too far from home
- Bus takes too long
- Bus do not run on schedule
- Price is too high
- Waiting conditions at bus stops are poor
- Danger of crime at bus stops
- Cannot find out when and where buses run
- Riding conditions are unpleasant

Source: “How Effective Are Your Community Services? Procedures for Performance Measurement” (2006).

The advantages of a user survey are that: (1) they can obtain more in-depth information on a particular service; (2) they involve fewer challenges in sample design since contact information of users is usually available; (3) they can sometimes be conducted in the facility where the service is being provided; (4) higher response rates are likely, since users have a personal interest in and knowledge of, the service they have used; (5) they are likely to be less expensive.

Survey Administration. Several techniques are available for surveying citizens. They include sending a survey by mail, conducting a survey on the telephone, in-person at home, in-person at a business or facility, and online on a computer with internet access. There are trade-offs to these techniques discussed briefly below.

- Mail surveys are likely to be the cheapest method, but they usually have a low response rate, requiring repeat mailings. They are also not useful in a country with high levels of illiteracy or poor postal systems.
- Telephone surveys have higher response rates than mail surveys and are less costly than in-person interviews at home. They are more expensive than mailed surveys since the phone interviewers require compensation and training. However, they can only be used for populations in which a substantial proportion has phone access.
- In-person surveys conducted at a respondent’s home or business yield the highest response rates. They, however, are the most costly to administer in developed

countries, since it requires choosing the enumerators, travel to respondents homes, and interviewer compensation for all this time. In-person surveys can provide more detailed information since the questionnaire can be longer and be more complicated.

- In-person surveys administered at a service facility, such as a license office, library, park, etc. can have high response rates and lower costs since respondents don't need to be found at their home or business. If information is sought after a period of time after the citizen has finished the service (often needed for many social service programs, it may be difficult or infeasible to get citizens to service facilities.
- Online surveys are an option only where substantial proportions of respondents have access to a computer and are literate. The costs associated with this are small, but response rates are not as high as in-person interviews.
- Combination of above methods can be used, sometimes being the most cost-effective approach, especially if the questionnaires do not require significant redesign between procedures.

2. Data Obtained from Surveys

Questionnaire development should consider how the information collected will be used. Often questions are included in surveys that provide information, but are not likely to be the basis for any policy decisions or changes in resource allocation. Cutting back on these questions can make the questionnaire length more realistic and help avoid questionnaire fatigue by the respondents. The wording of the questions is also very important. Sensitive questions, such as those about illegal behaviors and corruption can be asked in a way that reduces the sensitivity. Complex issues can be covered by asking about them in two or more different ways, both to confirm the response and to make sure that the respondent understands the issue.

Data Quality. It is worth investing time and effort in making sure that the data are reliable and entered correctly electronically. Data quality is important. The following elements need particular attention:

- *Sample design.* In some countries, good, reasonably current sampling frames may not be available. An option is to rely on satellite images of buildings, available on the internet. For some programs it may be feasible to survey all customers, or conduct an in-person interview at the facility if there are not too many clients. However, if a large number of citizens need to be surveyed, the appropriate sample size will need to be determined. Greater precision and separate information from population subgroups require a large sample size which is more costly. Thus trade off exist between response rates, precision, and cost of administration. Usually at least a 50 percent response rate is desirable.
- *Questionnaire design.* The length and content of the questionnaire impacts both the response rate and the quality of data. Multiple service questionnaires should take a maximum of 45 min to 1 hour to complete, before fatigue occurs. Appropriate

instructions should be given to the interviewers, including explanations they can give to respondents and when they should refrain from giving prompts. Instruction should also be given on skip patterns to questions to ensure that the correct information is obtained from the respondents.

- *Pre-test the questionnaire.* This can help determine if the survey instructions, questions and format are understandable and being interpreted the same way by those conducting the survey (interviewers or enumerators) and the respondents. Only a small number of respondents need to be administered the pre-test – as little as 10 to 20 respondents. Based on the results of the pre-test, the wording of the questionnaire can be adjusted, reordered, or in some cases even dropped.
- *Oversight of data collection team.* It is imperative to properly train interviewers to elicit accurate and consistent responses, and supervisors to ensure quality control. Once an interview is completed, any missing or inconsistent data should be identified by the interviewer. This should be followed by a supervisor checking to ensure that the questionnaire is filled out in accordance with the instructions, and that all blanks are filled, all critical data have been collected, and that all answers are legible. The more time it takes between interview completion and checking the survey form, the more difficult it is to make corrections. Sometimes it is necessary to make repeat visits to households. These visits should be scheduled as soon as possible after the initial visit. Partially completed surveys should remain with the team until they are finished. Once they are complete and have been checked and verified by the field supervisor, they should be immediately sent for data entry.
- *Data confidentiality.* Steps should be taken to ensure that the information provided by the respondent will not be attributed to them. One option is to assign a unique identity number to each respondent and not enter the name, address, or other information that can be used to link answers to each individual. This is especially needed if sensitive questions are to be asked, such as those relating to criminal behavior. Potential respondents should be ensured of this prior to their participation in the survey. Knowing that answers are confidential and accessible only to those who process and analyze the survey improves chances of eliciting correct responses and feedback from those doing the survey.
- *Response rates.* This is the number of citizens who complete the survey divided by the total number in the sample. If all users are surveyed, the response rate is the number completing the survey divided by the total number of users. A low response rate implies that the data will not be representative of the population or users. Response rates such as 65 percent or more are considered good. Response rates much lower than 50 percent are usually viewed with skepticism.
- *Data entry.* Enumeration is not complete until the information is entered into a database. If outliers or anomalies (that might be the result of incorrectly reported or incorrectly entered data) are identified while the interviewers are in the field,

households can be re-contacted to sort out discrepancies. Validated questionnaires should preferably be entered using a computer program form (such as EPI-INFO, MS-Access, etc.) that will allow the exclusion of inadmissible entries and automatically follow the required skip patterns. Sometimes data entry quality control is maintained by using a process of double blind entry, where all forms are entered twice and then matched to catch mistakes. However, such a process may be expensive. Another approach is to only re-enter a small portion of randomly selected surveys.

Data Presentation.² Usually most organizations have the technical staff that can assist in data analysis based on the objectives of the survey. Preliminary analysis such as conducting frequencies and cross-tabulations has also become remarkably easy with statistical software such as STATA or SPSS. However, an element often neglected is how the data are presented and the content of the presentation. This very much depends on the audience for the information. More details can be provided for an internal audience of the survey (program managers, staff, department heads, etc.), where the form, substance, and timely dissemination of reports are vital in providing useful feedback and stimulating quick action to achieve service improvements. For external reporting, such as to program directors or legislators, targeted information or summarized reports are necessary. A key factor determining the data presentation is to make the information useful and interesting for the readers. Using tables, maps, charts, and graphs along with the text provide a visual presentation of the information and can help to quickly convey key information if presented clearly with correct labels, headings, and legends.

Using comparisons to present data help provide the context in which services can be evaluated, giving service providers ways to interpret the outcome. Each comparison provides a different benchmark against which the survey data can be measured. Usually, comparisons are made across time, with pre-established targets, across regions, or with clients in other similar programs.

The following elements should be kept in mind while presenting information:

- Summarize the report highlights so readers can focus on key findings of the survey.
- Provide explanatory information to correctly interpret the data and understand unexpected or undesirable results. This reduces the concern of program managers and their staff that the data will be used against them.
- Highlight both success and failures.
- Identify any action that the program has taken or plans to take to rectify problems identified by the survey.
- First disseminate the report to program staff so that they can provide any additional explanatory information for the final report before it is released externally.

² This section is drawn from Hatry et al. (2007).

3. Special Challenges In Conducting Surveys

Conducting surveys in countries that have just started to use this tool and/or developing countries has special challenges. Both may lack the expertise and infrastructure that can assist with data collection and ensure reliable quality information. In addition, there may be reluctance to conduct surveys and report this information, or use the results in making policy decisions. However these challenges can be overcome, so that the resulting data while not at the same level of precision can be used in decision and policy-making.³

Lack of Recent Census Survey or Enumeration Areas. Because of lack of recent reliable data on individual households, obtaining representative samples may be difficult to obtain. In this situation, an older census survey may be used or in some cases the electoral register or telephone directory. Local governments have also street maps as a frame for a door-to-door survey. Although street maps do not show individual houses, they can be used to select specific streets, and then all houses on the street can be surveyed. The advantage of this is that the sample would include individuals who have recently moved into the neighborhood and are not yet in the electoral register or telephone directory. Satellite images available on the internet may also be used to identify number of houses in a neighborhood.

An expensive, but often-used technique is to generate a sample frame. This can be done by generating a census for randomly selected localities through street-to-street canvassing. An imperfect but common alternative is to pull together a frame from existing partial frames (out-of date census data, registration data, NGO client lists, organizational membership list, village-centric lists, etc.) but this method requires very explicit attention to potential biases of the resulting frame.

Cost of In-Person Interviews. In developed countries, such as the United States and Canada, high labor costs usually make in-person interviewing too expensive, so the more practical approaches, such as phone, mail, and internet, become the choice. This has the problem of lower response rates. However, in-person interviewing in poor countries is sometimes the best and only means of questionnaire administration. Mail or telephone is not likely to be appropriate due to limited telephone connections, irregular mail, and high illiteracy. Internet penetration is also low. In some countries, the higher costs of conducting in-person interviews sometimes becomes a deterrent to conducting the survey altogether. Costs can be decreased by surveying a smaller sample and decreasing the level of confidence in the representative sample from 95 percent to perhaps 90 percent. However, in low-wage countries with capacity, in-person interviewing can be quite economical.

The increased use of cell phones across the world provides another potential way to conduct surveys, since the number of people who have given up their landline telephones

³ Some of the challenges stated here are drawn from Mark and Nayyar-Stone (2004).



and rely only on a cell phone has been increasing both in the United States and internationally. However, phones in general are usually used for short user surveys rather than long multi-service questionnaires.

Lack of or Limited Survey Contractors. Survey contractors are widely available in developed countries and reliable information on their past work can be obtained. This is much less the case in developing countries. Some have only a very small number of survey firms. In others, the state owned statistical institute may be the only option. In some cases, these organizations can be bureaucratic and badly managed, leading to substantial delays in completing surveys. In addition, respondents may be less forthcoming in giving feedback and answers to questionnaires that are conducted by a state entity, especially if it does not have a strong reputation for confidentiality. Survey contractors need to stress that they are conducting the survey on behalf of a donor organization and that confidentiality of the data will be maintained so that responses cannot be linked to specific individuals. This assurance must be backed by real safeguards in the survey administration to protect confidentiality to avoid compromising future survey work.

Limited Attention to Metadata. Survey contractors with limited experience and expertise may be negligent in keeping appropriate records/information on the data that are collected with respect to sampling design, response rates, etc., so that it is either difficult to do a follow-up survey later, or track trends if later similar surveys are done. This can be avoided by insisting on a sampling technical report that details the sample design, methodology, response rate, etc., and by intensive oversight during survey preparation and implementation.

Restrictions on Accessing Information. In some countries, government insistence on accompanying interviewers and being present for the interviews causes severe bias in data collection, since it inhibits respondent's feedback and candor on the quality or access to services being provided by the government. The first choice is to avoid this situation by achieving a clear understanding with authorities. Stressing the confidentiality of responses during the survey interview may also help reduce the chilling effect of this.

4. Using Survey Information

Conducting surveys and getting quantifiable data is the first step toward using this information to improve services. But prior to using the raw data they need to be converted into useable information via analysis. Some of this has been discussed under Data Presentation in Section 2. In addition to being presented in tables, graphs, maps, and figures, survey questions can also be transformed into performance indicators. See the examples in Exhibit 4 below. Survey contractors can be of considerable help to their government (or nonprofit organization) sponsors if they do a good job on these tasks.

Performance indicator data denote the current status of the service with respect to its quantity, quality, access, rating, etc. Once survey data have been analyzed and transformed into performance indicators, they can be reported to service providers. Surprisingly, across the world, most organizations and governments undertake performance measurement and reporting, but make little use of the results in policy making. Performance data have little value and remain underutilized if nothing is done with the information.

Exhibit 4	
Converting Survey Questions into Performance Indicators	
Survey Questions	Performance Indicators
<p>How would you rate the general cleanliness of Accra?</p> <p>1. Very clean 2. Clean 3. Dirty 4. Very Dirty 66. Don't know</p>	<p>Percent of respondents who rate Accra as very clean or clean</p>
<p>How often is the refuse actually collected?</p> <p>1. Every day 2. Twice a week 3. Once a week 4. Once every two weeks 5. Once a month 66. Don't know</p>	<p>Percent of respondents who say that their refuse is collected once every two weeks</p>
<p>On average, on days when you have water, about how many hours each day do you have access to running water?</p> <p>1. 24 hours 2. More than 12 hours/day but not all 24 3. between 6 and 12 hours 4. between 2 and 6 hours 5. Less than 2 hours 6. I don't have access to water</p>	<p>Percent of respondents who have access to water less than two hours each day</p>
<p>In the past 6 months did you or someone in your household become sick from drinking water?</p> <p>1. Yes 2. No 66. Don't know 77. No answer/refused to answer</p>	<p>Percent of citizens who got sick from drinking water in the last 6 months</p>
<p>Would you be willing to pay a higher fee if you had access to better water service?</p> <p>1. Yes 2. No 3. Don't know</p>	<p>Percent of respondents who say they would be willing to pay a higher fee if they had access to better water service</p>
<p>How would you rate the quality of roads and streets in your city?</p> <p>1. Very good 2. Good 3. Bad 4. Very bad 66. Don't know 99. No answer/refused to answer</p>	<p>Percent of respondents who rate the quality of roads and streets in the city as very good or good</p>

The primary use of performance information is for government and organizations to provide accountability to their citizens and customers. However, one of the most

important uses of performance information is in making service improvements. Exhibit 5 suggests a number of important uses for survey-based performance information.⁴

Exhibit 5
Uses for Survey-Based Performance Indicators

1. Service Improvement Action Plans to plan and prioritize public service improvements.
2. Performance Indicators in Performance or Capital Budgets to improve decision-making about resource allocation.
3. Citizen report cards to publicize client evaluations of public services.
4. Program evaluation baselines to monitor program effectiveness.
5. Inter-governmental comparisons across jurisdictions to stimulate competition and identify best practices.
6. Service performance evaluations underpinning monetary or nonmonetary incentives to motivate public employees.

Source: Adapted from Nayyar-Stone et al. (2002).

Service Improvement Action Plans. The “Service Improvement Action Plan” is a technique that integrates performance information with the actions necessary to improve each service. These plans use the survey information to provide baseline data and as a basis for projecting the effects of alternative future ways to improve the effectiveness of the service.

Exhibit 6
Using Service Improvement Action Plans

In 2004, the Municipality of Kavaja, Albania, conducted a household survey with funding from USAID. The findings identified street cleaning as a service requiring attention. Only 15 percent of respondents viewed their city as clean or very clean. The city decided to create a SIAP to improve these results and achieve their objective of a “clean city.” A local government-citizen working group was established to analyze performance information from the survey, set targets, and establish actions for improvement, and monitor the service performance. The resulting actions (purchasing new garbage bins, (expanding garbage service, and reallocating existing resources) enabled Kavaja to improve its citizen satisfaction rating by 46 percent in one year and by over 100 percent within two years.

In 2008, the Tehsil Municipal Administration of Talagna, in Punjab, Pakistan, developed a SIAP for its urban roads and street sector. Focus Group discussions were conducted to identify priority issues in the sector. A household survey was designed and conducted for the sector. The data from the survey when analyzed and cross-tabulated for each neighborhood provided detailed information on the service quality, coverage and sanitation conditions. As a result of the SIAP, the working group identified 87 changes worth Pakistan Rupees 23.2 Million and incorporated these into the Annual Development plan for 2008. The changes have been approved by the city council and are currently being implemented.

Using Survey Information in Budgeting. Performance-based budgets use performance information for budgeting to help improve decision-making and resource allocation. Even

⁴ For more details on each use, see Hatry et al. (2007).



though governments may have limited authority to reallocate funds across different departments, governments usually have some scope to reallocate funds within departments.

Including survey information can be very useful in justifying requests for operating or capital budgets to elected officials and citizens. For example, examining citizen feedback on the timeliness of services, such as for emergency vehicles, can help agencies determine if more vehicles need to be purchased for a city.

Report Cards: “Citizen report cards” have been in use in various countries for about two decades. They are primarily diagnostic since they identify strengths and weaknesses. Identifying and publicizing those results can provide a clear motivation for improvement. A report card uses surveys, along with other data, to obtain ratings of specific services, which are then publicized. Preparing these report cards is typically carried out by an independent agency such as an NGO. (Ratings presented by an outside organization are generally perceived as more credible, but might be taken less seriously by government agencies, that may ignore or at best defend against charges of weak performance.)

Exhibit 7

Using Citizen Report Cards in India

In 1993–94 the Public Affairs Center in Bangalore, concerned about the deteriorating quality of public services, developed and implemented a citizen survey that measured user perception on the quality, efficiency, and adequacy of basic services extended by 12 municipal agencies. The results of the survey were translated into a quantitative measure of citizen satisfaction and presented in various media in the form of a report card.

- Eight of the 12 agencies covered in the 1994 report card made attempts to respond to public dissatisfaction.
- The worst-rated agency—the Bangalore Development Authority—reviewed its internal systems for service delivery, trained junior staff and began to co-host a forum for NGOs and public agencies to consult on solving high priority civic problems such as waste management.
- The report cards were also successful in generating political momentum for reforms, with the chief minister establishing a Bangalore Agenda Task Force of prominent citizens to make recommendations for the improvement of basic services.

In the second report card produced in 1999, the Public Affairs Center presented mini report cards to four of the key service providers (telephone, water, electricity, and the municipality) before the publication of results, and then organized workshops with senior officials from the agencies and the public after the publication of the results.

Program Evaluation Baselines. Survey information can be used to establish program baselines, that is, a measure of service performance at a particular point in time. Future targets, verified by a follow-up survey are then compared to the baseline to evaluate the effectiveness of the program in meeting public objectives. Most evaluation focus primarily on inputs and the management process rather than how the program affects its clients. Very often, data obtained from a citizen survey are the only meaningful way to measure the results of the program.



Exhibit 8
Using Surveys to Establish Program Baselines

In 2003, the city of Poti, in the Republic of Georgia (population approximately 50,000) conducted a baseline survey to evaluate the water service in the city. The survey revealed the following baseline information for key performance indicators, on the basis of which targets were established for the next two years:

Survey-based Indicators	Baseline 2002	Target 2003	Target 2004
Percent of citizens satisfied with the water service	63%	75%	85%
Number of hours per day that water is available for those on the network	4–6	6–7	7–9
Percent of fee collected	57%	65%	75%

Comparing Data across Jurisdictions. A comparison of survey data across regional or local jurisdictions can be used for:

- A local government to “benchmark” its own performance compared to other similar communities.
- National or regional governments to assess the quality of services within a certain sector.
- Policy-makers to determine whether adjustments need to be made regarding regulations, task assignments by level of government, resource allocation, or other factors.
- Identification of strong and weak performers in order to provide help where it is needed and to identify best practices.

Comparing across jurisdictions helps identify strong performers and successful practices. For example, once best performers in health care are identified by region, teams of staff from that local government can provide technical assistance to weaker local governments. This serves multiple purposes: providing broad recognition to those that excel, providing help where it is needed, and disseminating practices that work. Exhibit 9 below describes a comparative performance management system currently in use in the United States.

Exhibit 9
Using Survey Information for Comparisons across Jurisdictions

The Center for Performance Measurement (CPM) at the International City-Country Management Association is dedicated to helping local governments in the United States and Canada improve the effectiveness and efficiency of public services through the collection, analysis, and application of performance information. CPM currently assists over 220 cities, towns, counties, and other local government entities.

The benefits of CPM participation include: (i) opportunities to investigate and apply practices found to contribute to high performance in CPM communities, and (ii) mining of the data by CPM staff to find high performers and interview them to determine how they achieved their exceptional results. These findings are presented in CPM’s monthly newsletters and the book, *What Works*.



Employee Motivation. Survey data can be used to evaluate staff performance, identify the strongest performers, or otherwise motivate staff. Typically, the most successful methods are those that rely primarily on recognition (rather than financial incentives) and that focus more on identifying success than in pinpointing failure. Performance-based motivation can be especially successful if it is focused on teams—not just individuals—reinforcing outcome-orientation and rewarding innovation and success. Some specific incentives include the following:

Nonmonetary Incentives

- Using recognition awards
- Providing regular performance reports to all program personnel (this can be done by posting results on a bulletin board, for example, and can include breakdowns by region or by customer groups)
- Setting performance targets and regularly reviewing achievements in relation to targets (especially effective for shorter reporting periods)
- Giving managers more flexibility in exchange for more accountability for performance
- Making performance information an explicit part of the agency’s individual performance appraisal process (all persons in a group would receive the same rating on this part of the appraisal)

Monetary Incentives

- Linking pay to performance (has many difficulties, including the fact that external factors can greatly affect outcomes)
- Allocating discretionary funds to agencies for programs with high performance (e.g., providing extra resources for classroom equipment for a high-performing teacher, or returning a part of cost-savings to the program budget)

Exhibit 10

Using Survey Performance Data to Recognize Employees and Motivate Service Improvements

In 2009, based on focus group discussions and citizen consultation, Tehsil Municipal Administration Rohri, in Punjab Province, Pakistan identified water service as a priority for service improvements. To get further details on the water supply system, and its arrears, the TMA conducted a survey.

Data showed that most citizens do not pay their water bill. Two strategies were developed to deal with this: a media campaign to educate and increase the awareness of citizens, and an employee recognition award to acknowledge the top performing TMA official working on the recovery of quarterly water bills.

Mr. Zafar one of the star employee award recipients expressed his thoughts as such, “The TMA and citizens’ appreciation with this award is unforgettable for me. In the future, I shall give more to TMA services and will try to be a strong contestant for this award again next year.”

5. Conclusions

The most frequent argument used against conducting surveys is that it is too costly and time consuming. Usually the time and costs associated with conducting a survey are linked to the size of the sample and length of the questionnaire and can vary widely. Service providers do not weight these costs against the greater cost of not getting feedback from clients about how programs and public services affect them and the public at large. Survey results give information on what is working and what is not. This can be used positively to establish baselines, develop improvement action plans, allocate resources more efficiently, and motivate employees. Thus, when survey information is used to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of services, and report the performance to the public, the value of this evidence can far outweigh the cost of collecting it.



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