

Measuring Customer Satisfaction

Improving the experience of King County's customers



Prepared by the Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget
and the Customer Service Director, King County Executive's Office

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1. Introduction

These guidelines are designed to help departments, agencies, and programs focus on customer satisfaction, measure customer satisfaction across programs, use the information gathered to make service delivery improvements, and report to management and the public on progress in better serving—and satisfying—customers.

The document provides the following:

- An implementation framework for managing customer satisfaction;
- A common design for approaching and measuring customer satisfaction;
- Tools and resources for measuring customer satisfaction.



In the past, King County has assessed customer satisfaction in a variety of departments and programs. However, past assessments have used differing measurement methods and tools. Accordingly, these guidelines will help the county establish more uniform approaches and measurement procedures, which will result in more useful, meaningful customer satisfaction information, increased understanding of customers and the public, and improved ability to better serve the public.



This lighthouse is meant to draw attention to key points and guidelines.

The document provides a starting point in any department's efforts to enhance insight into its customers, improve the products and services offered, and find ways to improve services to customers and the public. It is intended that the document will be revised periodically based on the county's learning and experiences with customer satisfaction measurement and service improvement work.

These guidelines are based on King County's previous customer satisfaction measurement experience and effective practices from other jurisdictions (see resource list in Appendix A), which have been modified to fit King County's particular interests in customer satisfaction and process improvement. Although not comprehensive, the guidelines are designed to address the most commonly asked questions about purpose, design and use of customer information to improve services and programs. In addition, more technical resources for designing and fielding (or administering) surveys can be found in Appendix A.

Purpose

King County taxpayers support the work of county employees and deserve exceptional customer service through positive, respectful, responsive, and effective interactions with all county employees. Focusing on customer satisfaction is a component of good governance, and it is a countywide priority.

Customer satisfaction measurement has a critical role in informing service improvement. It allows an agency to understand what its customers value, how values vary between different types of customers, and where the agency can take action to improve service delivery.

King County's customer satisfaction measurement efforts are informed by 1) the King County Strategic Plan adopted in 2010, 2) the county's performance management system, and 3) the Director of Customer Service.

King County Strategic Plan

The 2010 countywide strategic plan elevates the importance and role of customer satisfaction in our work. The plan establishes three cross-cutting guiding principles that relate to customer satisfaction, the need to measure it, and the need to improve our services in response to customer experiences:

- Service-oriented – We listen and respond to our customers in a culturally responsive way and prioritize their satisfaction as we do our work.
- Results-focused – We establish community driven goals, measure our performance, and report to the public on our success in meeting those goals.
- Innovative – We are creative, learn from experience and results, and seek out new and efficient ways to solve problems and serve the public.

Service Excellence is one of eight goals in the plan. The Service Excellence goal is to establish a culture of customer service and deliver services that are responsive to community needs. Under this goal, Objective 1 is to "Improve our customers' satisfaction with King County" with the following strategies:

- a. Make customer service a primary focus for all county employees
- b. Gather customer feedback regarding service delivery and report results as part of the county's performance management system
- c. Improve local service delivery

Measuring customer satisfaction has a critical role in achieving all three of these strategies.

There are three other related objectives under the Service Excellence goal:

1. Build a culture of performance and improve the effectiveness and efficiency of county programs, services, and systems
2. Foster an ethic of working together for One King County
3. Increase access to King County services, personnel, and information

Furthermore, two other important and related goals in the plan are as follows:

- Quality Workforce - Develop and empower King County government's most valuable asset, our employees.
- Public Engagement - Promote robust public engagement that informs, involves, and empowers people and communities.

Listening to our customers, measuring customer satisfaction, improving our services, and engaging employees in making those improvements all support these strategic plan goals.

King County's performance management system

The focus on customer satisfaction is also reflected in the County's performance management system, and customer satisfaction results will be reported with other performance measures.

The standard framework for customer satisfaction measurement applies to departments' and divisions' major products and services. In measuring and reporting on customer satisfaction, departments and divisions will include the following:

1. Identify the primary drivers of satisfaction for their customers, and describe how they determined them (*see Chapter 3*).
2. Provide measures of:
 - a. overall satisfaction,
 - b. key drivers of satisfaction for a department's, division's, or program's unique customer base, and
 - c. other related, objectively-derived performance measures.
3. Explain the actions they are taking to improve customer satisfaction, and report on progress with key performance indicators.



Director of Customer Service

A Director of Customer Service has been appointed to advance both customer satisfaction and employee satisfaction by implementing improvements to customer service and ensuring that systems for feedback from customers and employees are in place. The Director of Customer Service is responsible for establishing performance measures for customer satisfaction and inspiring a culture of performance and continuous improvement by empowering employees to work together as one King County. Staff from the Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget will assist the Director in implementing this guidance and can provide additional specific guidance to departments in survey design and implementation.

Scope

Some departments and programs in the county have existing customer satisfaction measurement and service improvement efforts. Eventually, every county program should have some way of understanding and assessing its customers' opinions and improving customer satisfaction over time. This applies to both external and internal services.

All programs do not have equal resources, similar customers, or similar products and services. Therefore, it is not possible to prescribe a single measurement tool or methodology that could be used by all departments and programs. However, it is possible to prescribe a uniform goal for all departments and programs: Every department and program will improve its customer satisfaction approaches and measures over time, within the resources that are available.

For example, some programs may increase their use of customer comment cards, and others may move from comment cards to online or mail surveys. All forms of measurement that help departments better understand and serve their customers are encouraged, including post card mailers; comment cards; and phone, mail, in person, or electronic surveys. Low and no-cost methods are encouraged, where possible, if they meet both informational and programmatic needs.

While many different measurement approaches may be appropriate and useful in customer satisfaction measurement, all measurement should focus on gathering customer satisfaction information related to a specific agency product or service. Customer satisfaction measurement differs from the community-level surveys that the County has conducted in the past, such as the 2009 King County Community Survey done in support of the countywide strategic planning process. For example, the 2009 Community Survey surveyed a representative sample of all county residents, not necessarily only those that have had a direct service interaction with the county.

Each department will be responsible for developing and deploying its own customer satisfaction measurement approaches. There will be some centralized reporting, coordination, and technical assistance support for department surveys through the Customer Service Director and the Office of Performance, Strategy, and Budget.

Choosing programs to measure

It is not possible to measure everything at once, and departments will need to make choices about which programs and services to measure. In order to create realistic expectations and to be able to learn from our experience, departments and agencies should identify a few programs that will serve as learning opportunities for customer satisfaction measurement.

Although there are no hard and fast rules about which programs and services should be assessed first, the following are some recommended criteria to consider (not in ranked order):

- Largest number of people served
- Largest program, in terms of budget or staff
- Clear opportunities are available to improve (programs with known complaints/issues)
- Highest strategic priority
- High profile programs or programs with known controversy.

Principles for customer satisfaction measurement

The following principles should inform and guide departments' customer service performance measurement:

- The ultimate goal for all customer service should be "service excellence."
- A good way to find out what your customers care about and what their experiences are is to ask them.
- Customer satisfaction results are important to understand service delivery, will be used by management and employees to improve services, and will be reported to the public along with changes made based on the results.
- Whenever possible, leverage existing information and build on existing surveys and customer-focused work.
- Differences in programs, services, and customer populations may require differences in data collection procedures, measures, and strategies for improvement.
- Customer satisfaction measurement should focus on the entire customer experience, not just the final result or decision.
- Every program should strive to obtain scientifically representative and valid data, even though the degree to which this is achieved may vary based on resource availability, types of customers, and products/services offered.
- Customer satisfaction data collection efforts should be adapted to and modified for diverse customer populations.
- Customer satisfaction measurement should be proximal, or close in time, to the time of service or interaction. Assess customer satisfaction when a customer's experience is fresh.
- Measurement should reflect the various ways (channels or methods) customers access the service.

Framework for managing customer satisfaction

Measuring customer satisfaction is a critical component of improving customer service and satisfaction.

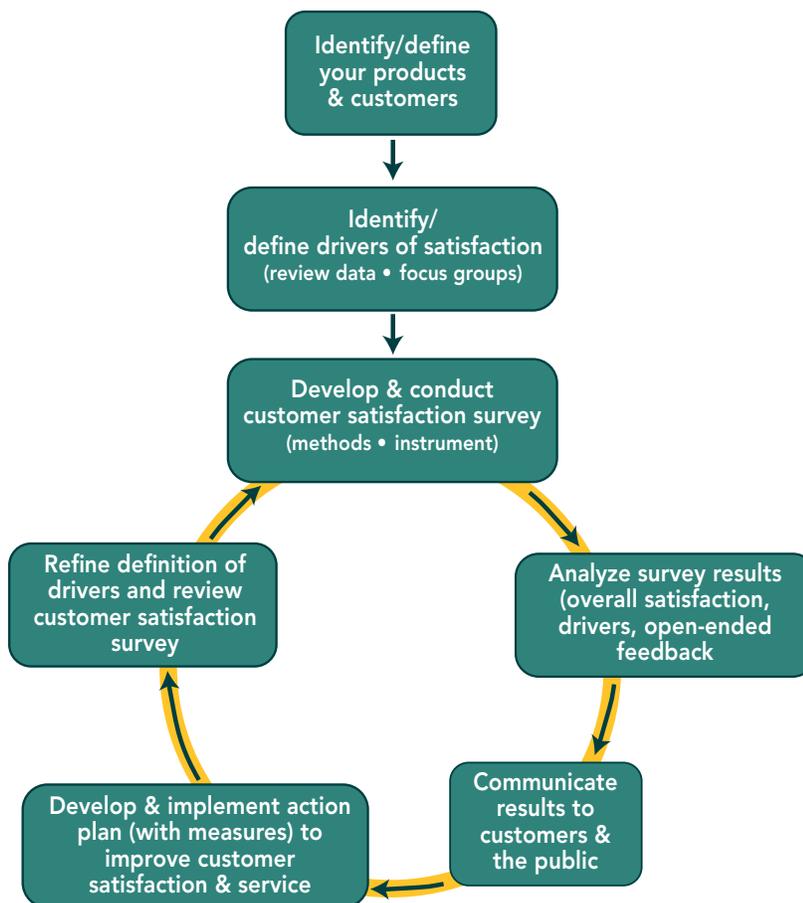
Measuring customer satisfaction is a means to an end: service improvement.

The service improvement process includes the following:

- definition and reflection about the service and its customers,
- gathering existing customer-related data,
- measuring your customer's experience,
- data analysis and developing insights,
- developing an action plan and communicating about that plan, and
- taking action to improve the service.

The following diagram represents the customer satisfaction measurement and improvement process in King County.

King County Customer Satisfaction Measurement and Improvement Process



2. Defining your customers

Customers are the recipients of the products or services that an agency produces.

An agency's products or services are the result of its internal processes, and can be defined using nouns, which are names of things that can be counted. Products and services should not be confused with the internal processes or the work that an agency does, which can be defined using verbs.

Examples of agency products and services:

- permits,
- parks,
- licenses,
- immunizations,
- treatment plans,
- contracts,
- websites, and
- bus rides.



A product is something created by work, which can be given to someone else to achieve a desired outcome.

Ken Miller, The Change Agent's Guide to Radical Improvement

Customers are people who directly receive and/or use the products and services provided by King County. Contact between customers and the county occurs in person at a counter and in the field, over the phone, by mail, and online.

Other names for *customers* might include the following:

- | | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| ■ Applicant | ■ Attendee | ■ Auditee |
| ■ Candidate | ■ Case | ■ Recipient |
| ■ Client | ■ Complier | ■ Defendant |
| ■ Driver | ■ Resident | ■ Violator |
| ■ Claimant | ■ Family | ■ Inmate |
| ■ Job seeker | ■ Offender | ■ Parolee |
| ■ Permit applicant | ■ Program participant | ■ Park user |

Not all customers are external customers. For departments providing internal services, customers are typically county employees. Many departments also provide regional or “wholesale” services; in this case your primary customers may be cities, fire districts, or other organizations.

Here are some examples of county programs and their customers:

Program/Service/Product	Customer
Bus	Bus riders
Jail visitation	Inmate families
Health clinics	Clinic patients
Restaurant inspections	Restaurant owners & managers
Parks	Park users
Car tabs	Car owners
Tax collection	Property owners
Building permits	Permit applicants
Email	Email users

Customer surveys vs. citizen surveys

Operationally, for the purposes of assessing customer satisfaction, we are referring to *customers* rather than taxpayers, citizens, or residents. Customers are distinguished from general residents who may benefit indirectly from the delivery of county services. Residents, as tax payers or voters, have a clear interest in the effective and efficient provision of county government services. Tax payers or residents in general are analogous to investors or shareholders of a company; they care deeply about the company but do not necessarily use its products. In fact, many organizations need to balance the needs of their customers with the needs of the public interest or the community at large. For example, think of the conflicting interests of jail inmates and the broader public interest in their secure detention, or the restaurateur being inspected and the dining public who wants a safe dining experience.

Although general opinion surveys can provide context for customer satisfaction measurement and ensure the voice of the general resident is included, that is not the focus of customer satisfaction measurement.

3. Defining drivers of customer satisfaction

The **key drivers** of customer satisfaction are those factors that most influence customer satisfaction for a particular service or product.

Many factors affect the customer experience, positively or negatively. These factors can be related to the things that customers value about a particular product or service delivery, or they can be related to whether customers' expectations are met or exceeded. Some factors will influence the level of overall satisfaction more than others do.



An important piece of customer satisfaction measurement involves identifying and understanding the key drivers that cause customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction.



Departments should provide analysis of key drivers of satisfaction as part of their customer satisfaction reporting.

If possible, departments will assess customer priorities first, determine the key drivers of customer satisfaction, and then develop the customer satisfaction survey around the key drivers.

There are various potential methods for identifying drivers. Some of the typical methods include focus groups or surveying customers. You can also use existing advisory boards, committees, or commissions as experts knowledgeable about your service. Use these groups to gather qualitative information about the following:

- Explore importance of different aspects of service delivery or product quality.
- Define specific expectations about quality.

For example, a program could use an existing stakeholder group to understand expectations and more specifically define and what is meant by "timeliness" or "accessible."

Service quality literature provides a number of different interpretations of the drivers most important in influencing customer satisfaction. King County has developed a list of potential drivers of customer satisfaction for county agencies to consider when developing their surveys. Listed below, these drivers of satisfaction are described in more detail in Appendix B.

Drivers of Satisfaction List

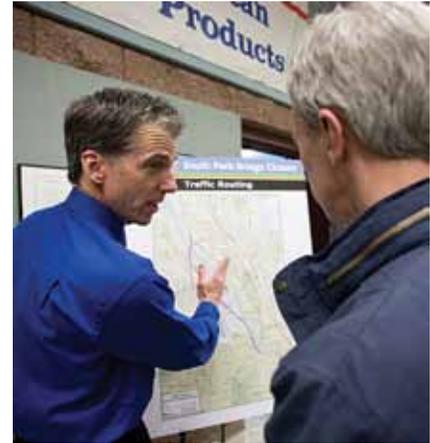
- **End result** – Product/service quality, process outcome/decision
- **Timeliness** – Speed and timeliness of service delivery
- **Information** – Quality and completeness of information
- **Staff competence** – Professionalism, expertise
- **Reliability** – Performance of service facilities, goods, and staff
- **Staff attitude** – Courtesy, politeness, friendliness
- **Fairness** – Honesty, justice, and fairness of the system/organization
- **Access** – Availability of staff, services, products
- **Look and feel** – Appearance, comfort of environment, facilities, staff
- **Safety and security** – Customer safety and confidentiality
- **Convenience** – Ease of obtaining product or service
- **Value and cost** – Value of the product or service compared to cost

4. Developing and conducting the customer satisfaction survey

In order to understand customer satisfaction, the County is recommending that all surveys in all departments use a common, five-point scale and include the following types of questions:



- A question about overall satisfaction
- Questions related to key drivers of satisfaction
- Questions about customer characteristics (demographic info)
- An open-ended feedback question



More information about each of these four question types is provided below.

It is vital that the survey be tailored to each departments' services, customer base, information needs, and resources. However, it is important that information gathered be comparable and meaningful; using the common scale and similar types of questions will help ensure that. Sample survey questions are provided as a starting point in Appendix C. Additional potential survey questions are available from the Canadian Measurement Tool Question Bank reference book (available from the Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget).

Scale

One of the issues that managers and the public often confront when trying to interpret results from different surveys is the lack of a common scale to measure responses to questions. For example, do ratings range from one to ten, or one to five? Does one represent the high (good) or the low (bad)? Although there is no universally applied scale for customer research, the Likert (pronounced "lick-urt") scale is perhaps the most widely used approach in survey research.

To ensure comparability of data, and so that results can be considered in the same general context, King County is adopting a common, five-point Likert scale, with five considered the highest rating.

The format for five-level Likert responses is as follows:

Satisfaction

1. Very dissatisfied
2. Dissatisfied
3. Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
4. Satisfied
5. Very satisfied

Agreement

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

Why adopt a five point scale?

Scales with even numbers force a choice in respondents that may not reflect their true beliefs. For example, a scale using one to four does not have a middle option and forces respondents to make a more positive or negative choice than they may believe. Scales with more than five options, such as 1-7 or 1-9, can be confusing and are more difficult for respondents to use.

Questions can also include a “Not applicable” option. “Not applicable” allows a survey respondent to acknowledge where the question does not apply to them; however, these responses are not included in the calculation of ratings.

Types of questions

King County recommends that customer satisfaction surveys should include four types of questions.

1. Overall satisfaction

Overall satisfaction measures are derived from questions that ask the customer to rate the service as a whole, such as, “Overall, how satisfied are you with the service provided by this department?” This kind of question is intended to capture all aspects of the customer experience, from the time the customer begins his or her quest to find the product or service, through receipt of the product or service, and into the use of the product or service. The customer experience can include customers’ interactions with service staff throughout the course of this process.

2. Drivers of customer satisfaction

If possible, the drivers of customer satisfaction will be identified prior to developing a customer satisfaction survey. Once the key drivers of satisfaction have been identified, effective survey questions can be developed around these drivers. See Appendix B for a menu of drivers of customer satisfaction compiled by King County because they are likely to apply to county customer satisfaction measurement.

For example, staff courtesy may be a key driver of customer satisfaction. In that case, the customer satisfaction survey might include questions about elements of courtesy important to the customers, such as respectfulness, empathy, or a sense that staff go the extra mile. As another example, a key driver may be access to online services, and this could lead to questions about web navigability, downtime, or hours of availability.

If key drivers cannot be determined prior to a survey, the survey can include questions asking customers to rate both satisfaction with and the importance of a set of possible drivers. For example, a survey can ask how satisfied a customer is with the cleanliness of the facility and then ask how important cleanliness is to the customer. These “importance” results can then be used as the basis for key driver analysis and help guide future surveys.

3. Customer characteristics

Departments should gather information that is important to better understand service delivery, customer segments, and overall customer demographics. Examples of service delivery-related information are as follows:

- How services are accessed (online, in person, over the phone)
- Day or time services are accessed

In order to understand and analyze your customer’s characteristics, it is recommended you gather basic demographic data (at the end of your survey) on the following background characteristics:

- Age
- Gender
- Race/ethnicity
- Income
- Zip code

Your program may have mandated reporting requirements for demographic information and if so then those categories (for example, age ranges) should be used. If not, then the County’s suggested default categories are presented in Appendix C.

The county’s Equity and Social Justice Ordinance focuses on race, income, class, gender, and neighborhood. Many of these items would be directly addressed by including questions about the characteristics recommended above. Appendix C presents suggested wording for these and additional demographic characteristics that may be useful to your program for reviewing results with an equity/social justice lens. Suggested wording for questions on employment status, primary language, and education level also is included.

4. Open-ended questions

Recommended questions up to this point have been structured, fixed-alternative, Likert-type questions (e.g., multiple choice). In order to gather true qualitative impressions from customers and allow them to express themselves in their own words, it is recommended that each survey include at least one open-ended question.

Examples of possible open-ended questions are as follows:

- Is there anything else you would like to tell us?
- What is the most important thing can we do to improve our service?
- Suggestions/comments?

Length

The length of surveys is always a serious consideration since it directly impacts the number of complete responses you will receive. Surveys should be as short as possible while gathering needed information. A rough guide for survey length is as follows:

- Online and mail – 5 to 10 minutes
- Telephone – 5 to 20 minutes
- Paper survey (at point of service) – 2 to 5 minutes

Although a comment card is not a replacement for a statistically valid or representative customer satisfaction survey, comment cards do provide helpful information about issues that need to be addressed by a program or service. Comment cards provide a simple way to get basic customer satisfaction information.

Survey administration

Although this guideline is not meant to replace more technical survey design information included in the references section, the following recommendations should be considered when fielding customer surveys.

Methodology

The survey methodology should be capable of reaching a random or representative sample of your customers and gathering the information you need. The methodology also should meet your resource constraints (for example, time and budget limitations).

Pre-testing

Before fielding the survey with a larger sample of customers, the survey instrument should be pre-tested with a small number of customers to make sure that questions make sense, are relevant, and provide useful information. In addition, the survey methodology should be pre-tested to insure that it flows smoothly.

Advance notice/reminders

Getting a large number of surveys completed requires diligent contact and follow-up. For example, letters (or post cards) advising customers that they will receive a survey and follow up letters reminding them to complete the survey are important in obtaining a good response to a mailed survey. Similarly, emails preceding a survey and periodic email reminders will be necessary to get sufficient response to emailed/online surveys.

Scheduling

Holidays should be considered when scheduling surveys. For example, it is more difficult to obtain a good response to a survey conducted in late November and December (after Thanksgiving and before New Year's) than it is to conduct a survey in late January and February.

Translation

Although the 2010 Executive Order on written language translation only applies to printed public communication materials and vital documents, departments are encouraged to translate surveys and related research materials if the primary customer base as Limited English Proficiency (LEP) or if the department is doing targeted service improvement work in a specific neighborhood or city where five percent or more of the population does not speak English as a primary language. Please refer to the Executive Order on "Written Language Translation Process" and related guideline (including language maps) at: www.kingcounty.gov/exec/styleguide/translation.

5. Developing and conducting focus group discussions

Departments may want to consider using focus group discussions to supplement customer satisfaction measures. Focus groups bring a small number of people (usually 6-12 customers) together to discuss research questions and generate qualitative information about their feelings and opinions, as well as their reasons for those opinions, attitudes, and beliefs.

In the King County customer satisfaction measurement process, focus groups would be most helpful (1) at the beginning of the measurement process, to identify and define drivers of customer satisfaction, and (2) near the end of the measurement process, to help interpret the results of the customer satisfaction surveys.

The following recommendations should be considered when designing and conducting focus groups:



Participant selection

Focus group participants should be able to speak to the questions that will be explored in the focus group. Thus, participants should share a common base of understanding, experience, and/or knowledge that will allow them to engage in a discussion of the questions. In addition, relevant background characteristics may be considered when recruiting focus group participants in order to insure that a range of customer perspectives is included while still permitting open discussion in the focus group. If your primary customer base has Limited English Proficiency, then consider holding a focus group targeted to that specific population or community. Focus groups with county employees or internal service recipients can be used by internal county services.

Focus group moderation

In order to have successful focus groups, the groups should be facilitated by an experienced moderator who is not part of the organization conducting the focus groups. Focus group moderation is challenging, and a moderator who is affiliated with the county organization conducting the groups is likely to influence the discussion or cause participants to frame their comments more carefully (or positively) than they would when talking in a group with an unbiased, third-party moderator.



Analyzing focus group results

The qualitative information obtained in focus groups can help explain why customers feel and perceive things the way they do; their range of feelings and opinions; and the reasons for their feelings, perceptions, and opinions. However, focus groups do not generate quantitative information and, therefore, will not give any indication as to what percentages of customers have, for example, a particular opinion, experience, or priority. Thus, focus groups are a good supplement to, but not a substitute for, quantitative survey research.

6. Analyzing, reporting, and using customer satisfaction information

In-line with the King County Strategic Plan's service excellence goal, customer satisfaction measures will help make customer service a primary focus for all employees while informing managers about opportunities for operational improvements.

For the purposes of Executive Office review and public reporting, agencies should prepare to report both on overall customer satisfaction trends, and on their customers' opinions about key drivers of satisfaction – the aspects of the customer experience that most influence their overall satisfaction. In addition, agencies should try to relate subjective customer satisfaction results to objective performance metrics.



The following types of measures are expected to be reported regarding customer satisfaction:

- Overall satisfaction
- Key drivers of satisfaction
- Key performance measures

Overall satisfaction: Agencies should report the average overall satisfaction rating from all respondents of a customer satisfaction survey. Agencies would derive this from an "overall satisfaction" question, for example, "Overall, how satisfied are you with this service?" In addition, agencies should present the distribution of overall satisfaction scores across the scale – of all responses, what percent were equal to 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5.

Key drivers of satisfaction: Agencies should determine key drivers of satisfaction for their products or services – those aspects of the customer experience that most influence overall satisfaction – through customer research such as focus groups and surveys, or through historical program information. Agencies should then use their customer satisfaction survey to get customer feedback on key drivers of satisfaction. As with overall satisfaction, agencies should report results as average ratings and distribution of responses across the scale. See Appendix B for a menu of drivers of customer satisfaction.

Key performance measures: These measures are additional objective data selected by the agency to provide context to the data gathered via surveys. They should relate to the key drivers of satisfaction identified by the agency. These measures are not derived from their customer satisfaction surveys, but come from agency records, documentation, and performance management systems.

Some examples of key performance measures include:

- Objective data on actual reported safety incidents vs. perception of safety derived from surveys
- Objective data on timeliness vs. perception of timeliness derived from surveys

Once data have been collected and analyzed, departments will compare against performance targets for each measure and show trends when possible.

After the customer survey has been designed and administered and the survey results analyzed to provide insight into customer beliefs, the most important part of the customer satisfaction process can begin: Finding ways to use the survey results and insights throughout your operational and management practices.

Some of the ways that customer satisfaction information should be used are listed below:

Management & Program Improvement

- Understanding customer perspectives and finding areas for improvement in processes and service delivery
- Refining and improving the customer satisfaction measurement process
- Internal staff meetings and management discussions of performance
- Executive level briefings and performance forums

Reporting

- Public reporting in annual reports, performance reports, Web sites, and newsletters to stakeholders, partners, and customers
- Internal reporting to program staff, management, and organizational partners
- Strategic and business planning analyses and documents

Funding

- Sharing customer data in grant applications and levy proposals

7. Taking the first steps

The Customer Satisfaction Survey Design Worksheet, included as Appendix D, can be used by staff to prepare for and design a department or program customer satisfaction survey.

In addition to this guide, there are other customer satisfaction measurement-related resources within the county.



Your department's Customer Service Officer and Public Information Officer should be consulted and informed when you initiate your customer satisfaction work.



If your department does not have expertise in choosing a methodology, designing and conducting a survey or focus groups, or analyzing survey results, it may be helpful to consult a specialist. The county's Human Resources Department has a consultant roster with consultants who could assist with customer surveys. The King County Customer Service Director and performance management staff in the Office of Performance, Strategy, and Budget are also available for consultation, guidelines, and review. Also look at the Customer Survey intranet page for a list of survey specialists within the county who may be able to provide consultation and assistance.

Some final words...

Although customer satisfaction measurement may seem challenging or even daunting, the information can be very meaningful, powerful and even inspiring. Here are a few actual comments received from King County customers about our programs and service:

"Your staff [names] provided excellent, kind and efficient customer service. They are a great team and terrific representatives for King County. Thank you!!"

"Staff member [name] always stood out as someone who genuinely cared about the customer. I see him winning over customer after customer with his smile and ever friendly and cheerful demeanor."

"I arrived in Seattle and was homeless without any money or friends. The King County Veterans Program allowed me time to repair my life and proceed with my education; this was vital."

"I would personally like to thank [staff member name] for all of her hard work on my case. Without her I would never have accomplished my goal."

"This was overall the very best experience I ever had dealing with a county agency. Thank you for a great experience!"

Appendix A: Additional Resources

There are additional resources that may be helpful as you better understand your customers, develop surveys instruments and survey approaches, and work to improve service delivery.

Understanding Your Service and Customers

Ken Miller. 2006. *We Don't Make Widgets: Overcoming the myths that keep government from radically improving*. Governing Books (www.governing.com/books).

Ken Miller. 2002. *The Change Agent's Guide to Radical Improvement*. ASQ Quality Press.

[John H. Fleming](#) and [Jim Asplund](#). 2007. *Human Sigma: Managing the Employee-Customer Encounter*. Gallup Press.

Customer Satisfaction Measurement

Harry Hatry et al. (ICMA). 2006. "How effective are your community services? Procedures for Performance Measurement, 3rd edition." See chapter on user surveys.

Terry G Vavra. 1997. "Improving your Measurement of Customer Satisfaction: A Guide to Creating, Conducting, Analyzing and Reporting Customer Satisfaction Measurement Programs"

[UK Customer Service Excellence](#): Comprehensive public sector service excellence program in the UK

- [Promoting Customer Satisfaction: Guidance on improving the customer experience in Public Services](#)
- [How to measure customer satisfaction: A tool to improve the experience of customers](#)

MORI Social Research Institute

- [Measuring and Understanding Customer Satisfaction](#)

[Canadian Institute for Citizen-Centered Service](#): Canada's customer-focused reform efforts

- [The Common Measurements Tool](#)
- [Toward Citizen-Centered Service Delivery: A How-to Guide for Service Improvement Initiatives](#)
- [How to Conduct Customer Surveys](#)

European Public Administration

- [European Primer on Customer Satisfaction Management](#)

New Zealand: New Zealand government's experience using the Canadian Common Measurement Tool

- [A guide to using the Common Measurements Tool](#)
- [Understanding the Drivers of Satisfaction and Trust in Public Services](#)

National Center for Civic Innovation. 2008. [Tips for Conducting Focus Groups to Develop Government Performance Measures and Reports](#)

Service Delivery Improvement

Michael L. George. 2003. *"Lean Six Sigma for Service: How to use LEAN Speed & Six Sigma Quality to Improve Services and Transactions."*

[iSixSigma](#): Web resources on process improvement using the Six Sigma approach.

Appendix B: Drivers of Customer Satisfaction

Driver	Description/Examples
End Result	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The quality of the end product or service, separate from the customer's experience in obtaining it. ■ In the end, the customer got what they wanted. ■ The functionality of the product or service. The end product or service meets the customers' needs. ■ The availability of service facilities, staff and goods to the customer, including both the quantity and the range of services and products made available to the customer.
Timeliness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Speed and timeliness of service delivery. This includes the speed of the service and the ability of the service provider to respond promptly to customer requests, with minimal waiting and queuing time.
Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The ability of the service provider to communicate with the customer in a way he or she will understand. ■ The clarity, completeness and accuracy of both verbal and written information communicated to the customer and the ability of staff to listen to and understand the customer. This includes keeping the customer informed.
Staff Competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The skill, expertise and professionalism with which the service is executed. This includes the carrying out of correct procedures, correct execution of customer instructions, degree of product or service knowledge exhibited by contact staff, the rendering of good, sound advice and the general ability to do a good job. ■ Staff's apparent commitment to their work, including the pride and satisfaction they apparently take in their job, their diligence and thoroughness. ■ An ability on the part of the service worker to flexibly amend or alter the nature of the service or product to meet the needs of the customer.
Reliability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The reliability and consistency of performance of service facilities, goods and staff. This includes punctual service delivery and an ability to keep to agreements made with the customer.

Driver	Description/Examples
Staff attitude	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Friendliness: the warmth and personal approachability of contact staff, including cheerful attitude and the ability to make the customer feel welcome. ■ Courtesy: the politeness, respect and propriety shown by contact staff in dealing with the customer and his or her property. ■ Care: the concern, consideration, empathy and patience shown to the customer. This includes the extent to which the customer is put at ease by the service and made to feel emotionally comfortable. ■ Attentiveness/helpfulness: the extent to which the service, particularly of contact staff, either provides help to the customer or gives the impression of interest in the customer and shows a willingness to serve. This includes going the extra mile.
Fairness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The honesty, justice, fairness and trust with which customers are treated by the service organization.
Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ In person: the ability to get to the service location, visible & clear signage, navigate the service environment. ■ On the phone: the ability to get through on the phone, navigate an automated phone system, speak with an agent. ■ On the web: the ability to find what is needed on the web, ease of navigation on the web.
Look & Feel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The aesthetic appearance and the ambience of the service environment, the presentation of service facilities, goods and staff. ■ The clean and tidy appearance of the service environment, facilities, goods and contact staff. ■ The physical comfort of the service environment and facilities.
Safety & Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The personal safety of the customer and his or her possessions while receiving the service or product. ■ The maintenance of confidentiality.
Convenience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The ease with which it is to obtain the product or receive the service; no hassles.
Value & Cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The degree to which customers perceive the product or service as worth the expense. ■ Can include direct monetary costs as well as implied or indirect costs such as the amount of time required of the customer to obtain the product or service (including preparation or travel time).

Appendix C: Suggested Demographic Categories

In order to better understand service delivery, customer segments, overall customer demographics, and to evaluate equity in service delivery, these basic demographic questions are suggested.

Age

In which of these age categories do you belong?

- 18 to 24
- 25 to 34
- 35 to 44
- 45 to 54
- 55 to 64
- 65 to 74
- 75 or older

Race/Ethnicity

Are you of Hispanic or Latino origin?

- Yes
- No

Which one - OR MORE - of the following would you say is your race...

- White
- African American or Black
- Asian
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- American Indian, Alaska Native
- Something else (specify:)

Annual Household Income

Which of the following best describes your annual household income before taxes?

- less than \$24,999
- \$25,000 - \$49,999
- \$50,000 - \$74,999
- \$75,000 - \$99,999
- \$100,000 - \$149,999
- \$150,000 or more

For programs that would benefit from an understanding of customer information on employment, education status, and primary language, these questions are suggested.

Employment Status

Are you currently. . .

- Employed for wages (full or part time)
- Self-employed
- Homemaker
- Student
- Out of work for more than 1 year
- Out of work for less than 1 year
- Retired
- Don't work
- Unable to work

Education

What is the highest grade or year of school you completed?

- Less than high school
- Some high school
- Grades 12 or GED (High school graduate)
- College 1 year to 3 years (Some college or technical school)
- 4-year college graduate
- Graduate or professional school

Primary Language

What language is usually spoken at home?

- English
- Spanish
- Russian
- Ukrainian
- Vietnamese
- Chinese
- Korean
- Japanese
- Something else (specify)

Immigrant Status

- Were you born a U.S. citizen? (Yes/No)

Appendix D:

Customer Satisfaction Survey Design Worksheet

This worksheet is designed to help you think through some key issues as you plan to conduct customer satisfaction work. This is meant as a starting point to help you identify key issues and allow you to plan your work. Please refer to the guidelines document, survey references, and any previous customer satisfaction-related work done by your program in developing these responses.

The underlined sections are designed to allow you to briefly write a response, help you clarify your approach, and allow you to get feedback from others in your organization.

1. Describe your Product/Service

- How do customers use the service (face to face, online, forms, phone, via contractor)?
- What is the specific product or service from the customer's perspective?
- Is the product/service: information, voluntary/required, available at other places or via alternative venues (counter service vs. online, available from different agencies), etc.
- Level of complexity of interactions for customers
- What is the direct cost of the product/service for the customer at the point of delivery?
- Are there indirect costs to the customer associated with the product/service, such as travel time or time required to fill out forms?
- Potential disparities between agency and customer descriptions of the service

The product/service we are going to gather customer opinion about can be described as:

2. Describe your customers

- Quantity: Approximately how many customers do you serve?
- Segmentation: Can you break down your customers into different groups based on service needs, location, or other key characteristics? Do different groups of customers need different products/services or is it "one size fits all"?
- Demographics: How well do you understand the demographics of your customers? Ethnicity, age, gender, income, educational level can all play a role in how you provide and assess your product/service.
- Other patterns: Do you have a steady stream or irregular customers? Are there time of day or seasonal patterns?
- Potential customers: Defining potential customers can help you identify key issues you may need to consider in expanding your customer base or service demand.

The customers of this product/service can be described as having the following characteristics:

Our customers can be segmented in the following ways:

3. Identify the key drivers of satisfaction for your customers. How do you know these are the key drivers?

- Draw upon previous survey, outreach, focus group, complaints/feedback, and other customer interaction work.
- Review the menu of Key Drivers in **Appendix B** for ideas.
- Conduct a new survey
- Document the basis for the key drivers you have chosen.

The key drivers of satisfaction for this product/service are:

We know that these key drivers are important based on the following:

4. Based on the key drivers selected, which specific questions will you use?

You can use more than one question to understand any particular key driver, but remain mindful of the overall survey length.

Key Driver 1: _____

Proposed Questions:

Key Driver 2: _____

Proposed Questions:

Key Driver 3: _____

Proposed Questions:

Key Driver 4: _____

Proposed Questions:

5. Do you have other performance measures relative to customer satisfaction that you can use that are *not survey-based* (e.g., objective quantifiable data) to use for comparison and to provide additional context?

- The three most likely key drivers that would have other performance data include: availability (for example: Internet uptime or downtime), timeliness (for example: actual time measures of service speed or time elapsed), and safety/security (for example: reported or investigated safety incidents).
- As an example, if you have conducted previous focus groups and you learned that your customers expect a 2 minute or less wait time, you can gather wait time data through another method (e.g., periodic timed observations, automatic time tracking technologies).
- With safety as an example, perceptions of safety are important but don't tell the whole story, actual incident data can be helpful to show that buses are safe or crime is going down in a neighborhood.

These additional measures are also helpful in helping us understand the context of our customer's experiences:

6. What are the best ways to reach your customers to gather their opinions?

- Consider ways that you will be able to get feedback from your customers: in person, online, through the U.S. Mail, via a phone survey, with comment cards.
- Consider cost, practicality, and how these may impact results.

The best way to reach our customers to gather their feedback is:

7. How will you use random sampling principles to ensure the customers you survey represent your entire customer base?

- Random sampling helps assure that you are not only getting feedback from the most unsatisfied or satisfied customers, but a mix of customers that represent your entire customer base.

- If you have small number of customers, you may need to try to gather feedback from all of them to ensure adequate representativeness.
- For larger number of customers, how will you develop a sampling approach? Will it be every other customer, every third customer, every 10th customer, etc.?

The sampling approach for this survey is designed as:

This sampling approach addresses random sampling/representativeness by:

8. After you have completed the survey and analyzed the results, you need to draw some conclusions and propose potential service improvement or management actions.

- Which driver is going to be the focus of your improvement efforts? What did your data tell you about what area may need improvement?
- Is any action warranted? If so, what is your action plan or key steps?
- Where are you going to report the data? Options might include at staff meetings, in reports, on your Web site, etc.

The driver(s) of satisfaction that we are going to initially focus on is:

What are we going to do to improve our customer's experience with our product/service?

We plan to present these customer satisfaction findings at: