

Frequently Asked Questions-- Employee Survey Results

Government of Nova Scotia

August 2004

1. Why was an employee survey conducted?

The survey was conducted in February 2004 to gather employee input regarding the government work environment. The survey results provide information to help improve the workplace for you and your colleagues. This is achieved by pointing out where government has strengths that should be shared across departments, and where employee perceptions may signal a need for improvements in communications and/or changes in practice. The survey results also provide information to support business and strategic planning, human resources management, policy development, and evaluation and audit activities. Finally, the survey results provide a starting point for government to use, in order to track and monitor progress towards improving the work life of public servants and the quality of services delivered to the public.

2. What do the results indicate?

Overall, employees responded positively to the survey questions. Over 4300 employees participated, representing a response rate of 53%; some departments had response rates as high as 70%. The results are representative of employee opinions, beliefs and perceptions. Among the strengths of the Government work environment are perceptions of teamwork, communications, occupational health and safety, benefits, and training. Areas for improvement include perceptions of leadership, merit-based hiring, career advancement opportunities, and retention. (Further details are included in the results report).

3. What's in it for me as an employee?

The employee survey provides you with an opportunity to provide candid input to help shape the work environment and create a better workplace for you and your colleagues. Employees can participate in discussions within their workgroups, with their supervisors and managers, to support positive action in response to the survey results. Employees may also have an opportunity to participate in further research activities, to explore and better understand survey results. Finally, your input, via the survey results, is integrated into government's corporate human resources plan and each department's business plan, and is an indicator of your department's performance.

4. What will be done with the results?

The results have been presented in an audit report that outlines strengths, opportunities for improvement, immediate areas of concern, and trends. The Public Service Commission (PSC), on behalf of government, is coordinating government's response to the results. Senior management teams throughout departments are preparing department responses and action plans. Employees may be asked to participate in further research activities to explore the issues raised in the survey. Performance targets based on the employee survey results will form part of government's business planning process, and integrated into annual business and accountability reporting. Additionally, strengths that have been outlined in the report will be celebrated, and success stories shared across government. Actions taken in response to the survey will be communicated regularly and follow up surveys will be conducted to measure any changes in opinion that may occur.

5. How do I find out what is happening in my department?

Senior management teams across government departments, under the direction of the department's deputy minister and in coordination with the Public Service Commission (PSC), are preparing responses and plans for action.

6. Will I hear about progress?

Yes, departments and the PSC will keep you up-to-date on progress throughout the year. In addition, you can visit the survey website, www.gov.ns.ca/psc/survey, where information on how and what is being done will be available.

7. How do I read and interpret the data?

There are two components to the results report; Volume I contains government-wide survey results and Volume II contains department-specific results.

Responses provided by employees are categorized into three areas: *favourable responses* (when employees selected somewhat or strongly agree), *neutral responses* (when employees selected neither agree or disagree), and *unfavourable responses* (when employees selected somewhat or strongly disagree). The percentage of favourable responses is most often cited in the report.

As an example, 68% of employees report they can balance the demands of their work and personal lives. Sixty-eight per cent refers to the percentage of respondents who chose either somewhat or strongly agree to the question on the survey that asked about balancing work and personal life demands.

8. Can I see the results for my workgroup, division, and/or location?

The results were not sorted by division or location. Extra care went into ensuring that responses were anonymous, some divisions and locations have fewer than ten employees; therefore, the results were only sorted according to department and general demographic information (age, gender, years of experience, etc.)

9. How do we compare to other organizations?

In general, results from the Government of Nova Scotia employee survey are comparable to other organizations in the public sector in Canada. Direct comparisons on a question-by-question basis is not available, as there are differences in question wording, survey methods, survey design, and analysis. Managers and employees are encouraged to look at their department results as they compare to the overall results, and to develop performance targets that take this information into consideration.

10. Who conducted the survey? Who analyzed the results?

The Evaluation and Audit division of the PSC planned, designed, and conducted the survey, with support from the PSC's senior management team. An outside firm, Sierra Systems Group, reviewed the survey instrument, received all completed surveys, coded survey data to prepare for data analysis, and conducted statistical analysis with the Evaluation and Audit division.

11. How were the survey questions developed?

A comprehensive literature review, review of other public and private sector employee surveys, and related research was conducted to support the creation of the survey. In addition, Human Resource Directors from CSUs across Government, PSC senior management team members, and divisional representatives from the PSC provided input into the creation of the survey tool.

12. Can I see my department's results in addition to the overall results?

Yes, department-specific results are outlined in Volume II of the report. Further details are outlined on the website, www.gov.ns.ca/psc/survey.

13. Why was I not included as a participant in the survey?

All permanent civil servants, CUPE Local 1867, and NSGEU Local 480 employees, as of December 1st, 2003 were provided with an opportunity to participate in the survey in February 2004. Neither contract nor casual employees were included in the survey; however, these groups may be included in future surveys.

14. Will other employee surveys be conducted in the near future?

The PSC, on behalf of government, will conduct a follow up employee survey in the winter of 2005, with a representative sample of employees. (The overall employee population will be surveyed every 3-5 years to re-establish the baseline of data to be used for comparisons and to monitor progress).

15. Who can I contact for more information?

Please talk to your Supervisor or Manager if you have questions regarding your department's response to the employee survey results. You can also visit the survey website for more information, www.gov.ns.ca/psc/survey. If you have questions regarding detailed survey results or the survey methodology, please contact Carrie Hotton, Program Evaluator in the Evaluation and Audit division, hottonca@gov.ns.ca, or (902) 424-6655.