

Client Satisfaction Surveying: Common Measurements Tool

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Preface

The development of the Common Measurement Tool (CMT) drew on the knowledge and experience of many public employees. The material presented here is our collective effort to develop an approach specifically for the public sector.

While we intend the CMT to be a vehicle to bring consistency to client satisfaction measurement across time and between organizations, it is important to note that we recognize the value of gathering ongoing input so the tool can be improved. To this end, we welcome feedback and suggestions for improvement as well as information about how and where the CMT is used. Please direct your feedback to the Strategic Research and Planning group of the Canadian Centre for Management Development at (613) 943-8370 (telephone), (613) 995-0286 (fax) or web@ccmd-ccg.gc.ca (email)

The companion to this report is *Client Satisfaction Surveying: A Manager's Guide*, and is available from the Strategic Research and Planning group. It is a "how-to" survey guide based on and including the common measurements surveying tool. Therefore, whereas this document, *Client Satisfaction Surveying: Common Measurements Tool*, establishes the rationale and value of the CMT, *Client Satisfaction Surveying: A Manager's Guide* helps guide managers through the survey process using the CMT as its foundation. Both *Client Satisfaction Surveying: Common Measurements Tool* and *Client Satisfaction Surveying: A Manager's Guide* are available from the Canadian Centre for Management Development's website at <http://www.ccmd-ccg.gc.ca>

Executive Summary

In July 1997, the Citizen-Centred Service Network (CCSN) noted that a significant service gap still exists in Canada between citizens' expectations and the actual service provided despite substantial efforts directed towards modernizing service delivery. Numerous strategies to address this public service challenge were identified by the network, including the need for a common client satisfaction measurement tool.

In order to understand why "service gaps" exist in the public sector and to identify ways of decreasing or eliminating them, it is necessary for organizations to have clear, meaningful input from their clients. There are many different ways of gathering this information and it is common for organizations to design tools for specific client input exercises. Many of the tools used have not been as well designed as they might be and it has not been possible for organizations to compare data with other similar organizations. In response to this problem, the network sponsored the design of the Common Measurements Tool (CMT).

The CMT is intended to gather client feedback. Client satisfaction surveys are distinctly different from citizen surveys. Client surveys ask questions about the delivery of service at an operational level. This includes questions about specific details relating to the service delivery experience, such as how much time it took to be served, whether the staff were courteous and helpful, how convenient the facilities were, and so forth. In contrast, citizen surveys assess issues that are indirectly related to the delivery of services, for example, whether certain services should be provided by public or private organizations. In other words, citizens are stakeholders who receive indirect social benefits from public services whereas both internal and external clients are the direct recipients of public services. Given these differences, it is important to design separate measures for each.

The CMT is designed to provide client feedback to any public organization. To ensure that all aspects of client service are considered, the CMT was conceived around five key elements: client expectations, perceptions of the service experience, satisfaction levels, levels of importance, and priorities for service improvements.

In going beyond satisfaction levels to include the other elements, it is possible for organizations to learn not only what components of service are not satisfactory to their clients and to what degree, but also to gather information to help determine the best course of action. The CMT prescribes that information be collected to assess levels of satisfaction against areas of importance. In so doing, it is possible for organizations to more accurately identify what needs to be fixed. Specifically, those areas that are very important to the client but are areas of low satisfaction are the places for organizations to work on first. However, assessments of satisfaction by importance often give an organization more things to work on than can be resourced. To pinpoint critical improvement areas, clients also need to be asked how they prioritize needed

improvements. With this information, organizations can target priorities for improvement and funnel these into a manageable portfolio that best serves their clients.

Information on satisfaction, importance and priorities for change is usually not enough, however. To address a service gap it is also necessary for an organization to know what its clients expect to receive and what level of service the organization needs to provide in order to satisfy these expectations. Without this information the organization will not know what “fixed” means to their clients.

Information from the five key elements discussed above can provide organizations with comprehensive information upon which to base decision making. As noted, this can include decisions on what to change and where to allocate resources. It can also include information that helps manage client expectations. There are occasions when clients’ expectations may not be realistic or achievable. The information collected through the CMT can provide direction on areas in which expectations need to be managed through communication with clients.

The five elements (expectations, perceptions, satisfaction, importance, and improvement priorities) serve as the foundation for the types of questions that are asked in the CMT. In addition, it was necessary to identify the areas in which to pose these questions. To this end, five dimensions of service delivery have been identified: responsiveness, reliability, access and facilities, communications and cost (where applicable). Within the CMT these all come together such that questions for specific dimensions are framed around the five elements. For example, the tool asks clients how long they waited to receive the service, how long they expected to have to wait, how satisfied they were with the amount of time they had to wait, how important waiting time is, and where waiting time fits as a priority in the context of other aspects of responsiveness.

Organizations may recognize the need to assess client satisfaction, but heavy workloads and time constraints may prevent this research from taking place. The CMT takes the major design work out of the process while enabling the organization to select the assessment information required, thereby ensuring relevance to their organization, the services they provide, and the clients they serve. This is done by encouraging organizations to pick from the CMT those sections that are most appropriate to their services and clients. In this way, the CMT is adaptable to customization yet provides a basis for comparative information stemming from consistent survey inquiry in many service areas.

It is important to stress that the purpose of the CMT is for the operational use of organizations wishing to improve service to their clients. The information it produces is intended to be useful to managers as an aid to decision making, resource allocation and business planning. It is not intended for auditing purposes but rather to promote continuous organizational improvement.

It is hoped that the availability of the CMT will encourage more public organizations to engage in client surveys with a fuller understanding of the factors that determine client satisfaction. In so doing, it will be possible for the public sector to address the broad service gap identified by the Citizen-Centred Service Network.

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1. Introduction

In a democratic system, government acts on behalf of its citizens. As a collective, the citizenry can be viewed as the government's clients.¹ It is thus imperative that the public service make a concerted and strenuous effort to meet the needs of its citizens and clients.

The lens with which an issue such as service satisfaction is viewed may have a profound impact on the analysis that emerges. For example, many studies have compared satisfaction levels of services between the private and public sectors, generally concluding that public services lag far behind private services. There are numerous flaws in the nature of these studies, but primarily, the results do not lend value to improving service quality within the public sector in an operational capacity.² The primary focus of this paper moves in a solution-oriented direction, towards the collection of information to be used in developing strategies to improve service at an operational level. Initial concentration at this level of service delivery is a logical approach to initiating such an inquiry. Successful implementation at an operational level may then pave the way for a broader application of such methodology.

The first step in addressing a service disparity is to identify where service delivery does not measure up to citizen/client expectations. Assessments of citizen/client satisfaction levels by public service organizations at all levels will provide valuable data to address these service gaps.³ It is imperative that data utilized in strategic planning by organizations to address this broad public service gap be the most relevant, reliable and valid possible. A host of survey methodologies and research projects on customer/citizen/client satisfaction with services within the private and public sectors has preceded this project. This paper will make methodological recommendations for a common measurements instrument to be used in order to meet the primary goal of client/citizen surveys, that is, the development of strategies to improve public services.

In July 1997, the Citizen-Centred Service Network noted that a significant service gap still exists in Canada between citizens' expectations and the actual service provided despite substantial efforts to modernize service delivery.⁴ Numerous strategies were identified to address this "service gap."

The network recognized the need to broaden understanding of citizen/client expectations, satisfaction levels, and priorities for service improvement.⁵ Among other things, the network acknowledged the need to undertake research to identify lessons learned and good practices in the area of partnerships, single-window delivery, and measurement tools.

Surveys of client satisfaction with services provided can serve numerous purposes in overall service improvement. Research of this nature can explore what components of service are not satisfactory to the citizen/client, and to what degree, and can also as identify what elements of service are the most important to clients. Data collected may be used to assess levels of satisfaction against areas of importance to target priorities for improvement. This enquiry can assist in identifying the most crucial areas for improvement in order to funnel priorities into a

manageable portfolio. Satisfaction surveys of this nature can also provide information about frequency of use of the service by respondents and demographic/social data for crosstabulation to reveal trends in relation to perceptions and expectations of service. While it is evident that satisfaction surveys are an effective tool in attempting to improve public services, the problem with this approach at the present is that few standardized or consistently employed instruments exist in government.⁶ Commonly used survey items and measurement scales offer organizations comparability between like-services and benchmarking over time. The development of a common measurements instrument may potentially result in resource efficient implementation and analyses.

The Canadian Centre for Management Development (CCMD) research plan detailed the parameters of this project as follows:

“...develop a common standard of metrics across the public sector in survey terminology and measurement scales, in order to permit comparison of results among organizations, and to measure progress over time.”⁷

This paper will recommend best practices in surveying clients on public service delivery to meet the main goal of developing strategies to improve citizen/client satisfaction with public services.*

TERMINOLOGY – CLIENT VERSUS CITIZEN

It is critical to distinguish between the concepts of “customer” and “citizen” at this point. A report entitled, *A Strong Foundation: Report on the Study Team on Public Service Values and Ethics*, published by the Privy Council Office and CCMD describes citizens as

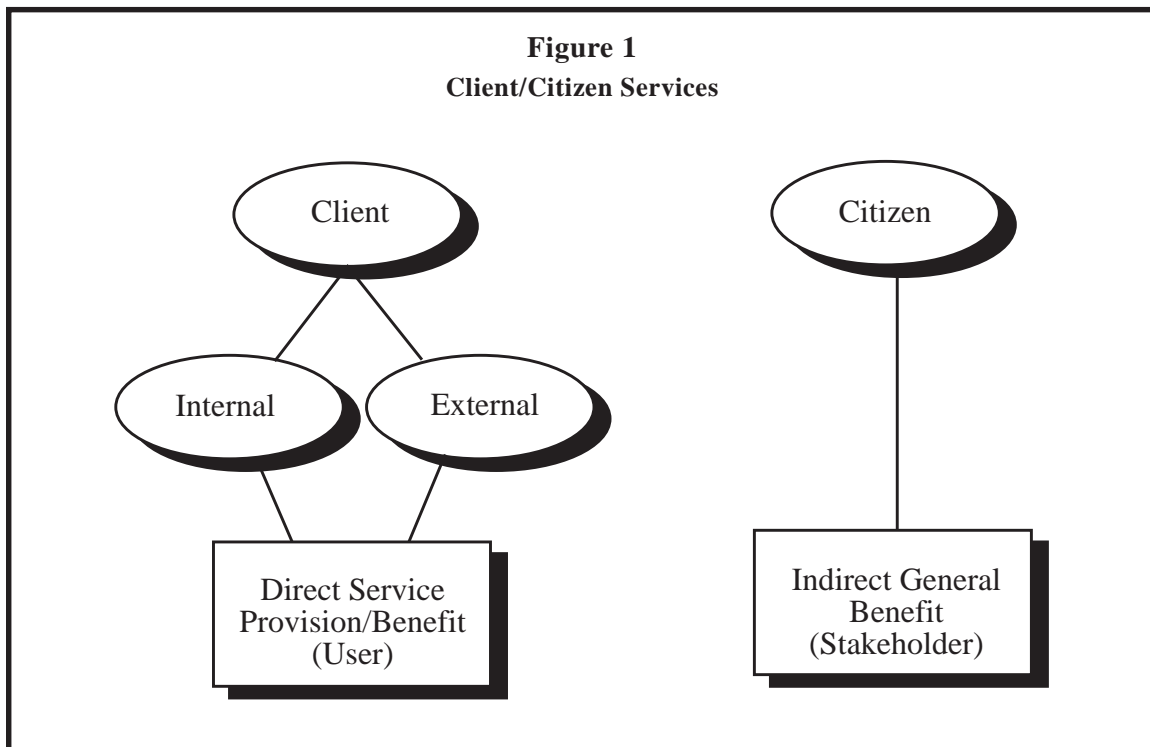
“bearers of rights and duties in a framework of community . . . citizenship is not something isolated or purely individual. Citizenship derives from membership in a wider community of purpose, the democratic community to whose larger interest the public service is dedicated.”⁸

The customer is distinctly different as s/he does not share common purposes with a wider community, but rather seeks to optimize his or her own individual advantage. Usually, the customer is free to select another service provider when not fully satisfied.⁹ Conversely, the citizen is expected to work collectively with others, through the democratic process to alter an unsatisfactory situation.¹⁰

Further clarification is necessary to distinguish between the terms “client” and “citizen” used in this paper. The following definitions stem from the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat publication, *Who is the Client – A Discussion Paper* and are apropos to the focus of this research paper.¹¹ Figure 1 located on the next page offers a visual representation of the distinctions made.

*To assist managers through the survey process, the companion to this report, *Client Satisfaction Surveys: A Managers Guide*, is available from the Canadian Centre for Management Development’s website at <http://www.ccmd-ccg.gc.ca>

“Clients” are considered to be the direct recipients of government services via dealings with a service provider. Clients can be further divided into two sub-groups – “internal” and “external” clients. Internal clients refer to public sector employees that receive services directly from fellow government service providers in order to, in turn, provide services to their clients. External clients are members of the public who are direct recipients of public services. The use of the term “citizen” will refer generally to taxpayers who do not actually benefit directly from a service, but who may draw an indirect benefit and who contribute to it and thus have an interest in it.



The following example may serve to illustrate these definitions. A *citizen* may not collect employment insurance and yet has an interest in how the system functions; the actual recipient of an employment insurance payment would be an *external client*. A regional employment insurance office that depends on a central agency to distribute the employment insurance payments to their office would be an *internal client*.

Public employees simultaneously serve numerous clients/citizens with conflicting interests. For example, the front-line employee may assist an applicant as a client in accessing the required service. At the same time, the front-line public servant may be serving the citizen by ensuring that applicants being approved for a specific service meet all the eligibility criteria. The challenge is to balance value for money for citizens (taxpayers) with high quality, accessible service for clients.¹² This places the front-line public servant in a position unique to government; again a distinctly different experience than that of the privately contracted service provider. Service providers often have different priorities from those of service users. Clients should be consulted

in order to help public service organizations identify which areas of performance are most crucial.

Deakin and Wright, in their text, *Consuming Public Services*, provide a relevant discussion that cautions against the collective treatment of clients and citizens in relation to public service consumption and accountability.

“Indeed, it should not be forgotten (although it frequently is) that ‘the difference between citizens and consumers is all important.’ The general body of citizens has views and interests, as non-users, or ‘contingent’ users,’ or simply as taxpayers or ratepayers. These may diverge from those of the immediate users of the service. Hence the case for wider participation is not the same as the case for more power for the users of specific services or facilities. The attempt to increase accountability of a public service to the general citizen body is not the same as the attempt to increase accountability to particular bodies of consumers. It may well be right to think of moving simultaneously on both these fronts (as we do); but this makes it all the more important to recognize that the directions in which we will need to move are not only not the same, but may diverge quite sharply.”¹³

In light of this discussion, it is evident that a common measurements instrument to assess satisfaction levels of public services is perhaps more relevant to clients, than to citizens. Clients, both internal and external, are the direct recipients of services; citizens are stakeholders who receive indirect social benefits of public services. It does not appear appropriate to ask specific service delivery questions at such a broad level. The client can evaluate a specific service experience; however, broad questions around service delivery at the citizen level tend to lose their validity. For example, you can enquire how long a particular service transaction such as receiving a marriage licence should take from the client’s perspective. The question is specific and the respondent understands the experience to which it refers. On the other hand, if you ask citizens the length of time it is acceptable to receive required documentation from a “government” office, the validity is lost due to the ambiguity of the reference point. The question assumes that all services of this nature across government would require similar response times and can be broadbrushed. The defensibility of such an approach is questionable.

A further difficulty arises from differences in the types of questions that can be appropriately asked of clients and citizens. As direct service recipients, clients can provide information about their personal subjective experiences. As indirect service recipients, citizens can provide information about services from a general outcome or business/stakeholder perspective. This logically leads one to develop specific service level questions for clients relating to variables such as responsiveness, reliability, timeliness, accessibility and fairness. For citizens, broader taxpayer-level variables such as overall quality, productivity and effectiveness seem relevant.

In light of the above distinctions, the common measures developed by this project will be limited to service delivery surveying at the client level.

CLIENT SATISFACTION SURVEYS

Purpose of Common Measures

Requests for common measures have preceded this initiative in an effort to improve service in the public sector. For example, in 1992 the Service Quality BC Secretariat conducted research and educational workshops for public service employees. At that time, the Service Quality British Columbia Steering Committee made the following recommendations to Treasury Board of BC.¹⁴

“[that] the provincial government establish a customer research support group that would be tasked with assisting government entities by developing a generic survey model to serve as a template for future customer surveys. The group would focus on the development of instruments specific to program areas, but would also allow for an overall province-wide picture of customer expectations and perceptions to be obtained, through continuity of design, format and response scales.”¹⁵

There is a strong rationale for utilizing common measures in assessing client satisfaction levels with public services. A common measurements tool will provide a fixed reference point, which is perhaps the most effective way to attribute meaning to survey results by providing consistency and comparability. This approach offers the benefits of accessing operationally useful and site specific information at various organizational levels while ensuring comparable measures. In addition, potentially this instrument will build normative benchmarks for ongoing assessments by the organization using it.

In addition to aiding in the establishment of service standards relevant to client expectations and assessing levels of satisfaction with service provided, this instrument will gather information on the importance of service criteria and priorities for improvement. While it is valid to question whether importance and priorities can be framed into clear comparative measures, collection of this information will serve to expand public service knowledge in this area. Increased knowledge of areas of importance and priorities for improvement will aid decision making, strategic planning, and resource allocation.

Organizations may recognize the need to assess client satisfaction, but heavy workloads and time constraints may prevent this research from taking place. The Common Measurements Tool (CMT) (Appendix II) will take the major design work out of the process, while enabling the organization to control the operational content that is site specific. The common measures will be adaptable to customization and yet will provide comparative information stemming from consistent survey inquiry in many service areas.

It is crucial to clarify the purpose of the Common Measurements Tool developed in this paper. The information collected is intended for *operational use for the benefit of organizations*.

To be clear, this instrument is not intended to result in a national system of benchmarking. It is not intended for auditing purposes, nor is it intended to result in punitive actions; rather, the

information it produces is for the use of individual organizations to assist them in managing well internally, not for political gains externally. This instrument is intended to provide information to promote improvements in the delivery of public services at an operational level.

Other Survey Methodologies

Using a common set of measures is only one of many possible methodologies. Three methodologies that allow comparative analysis of survey findings of client (customer) satisfaction evaluations were identified in a literature review conducted at the Canadian Centre for Management Development.¹⁶ These are:

1. Customer Satisfaction Index
2. Scale Conversion Methodology
3. Standardized Survey Instruments

The Citizen-Centred Service Network has indicated the need for the design of a common measures tool, which is the purpose of this paper. It is useful to clarify the selection of this methodology over the other options cited in the following discussion.

Customer Satisfaction Index: American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI)

A number of countries have adopted a customer satisfaction index (CSI), generally to be utilized as an economic indicator that measures customer satisfaction.¹⁷ This model uses a multi-equation, econometric model to produce four levels of indices and is designed to assess served markets' expectations, which assumes direct consumption. However, it should be noted that while the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) includes some public service agencies (a small percentage in comparison to the private services assessed), a number of key public services are excluded. For example, public service organizations in agriculture, forestry and fishing, where no end users are reachable, are omitted. The "market" orientation of the ACSI also generates questions about its application to public services that function to prevent increased use of services, such as health, social services, and addiction counselling.

The ACSI model defines "loyalty" as the dependent variable.¹⁸ Complaints are described as leading to exiting the market, but this is often not the case in public services – often it is not an option to exit a public service. These fundamental premises are problematic for services that are monopolistic in nature, such as many public services. The ACSI finds a positive correlation between competition and differentiation, both of which are often not a variable of public service. In addition, a plethora of public services are involuntary in nature which again poses obvious problems in utilizing a CSI. A comparison of voluntary private services with involuntary public services creates apparent discrepancies that will colour the results of public services generally in a negative light. Client surveys have the potential to provide data that will identify service gaps and reveal which areas are of importance to the respondent in order to determine priorities for improvement. The ACSI is not intended to provide information on the importance of

particular service elements and their priorities for improvements. Yet in order to meet the goals of the Citizen-Centred Service Network, this information is vital. The goal is not to devise a national system of benchmarking, but rather to design a tool for public sector organizations to use on their own, or in combination with other assessments, a tool that is standardized, so that normative data can be collected and comparisons can be made.

Scale Conversion Methodology

The second option for comparing satisfaction levels is a meta-analysis that entails the use of a scale conversion method. In one example, Miller and Miller developed the “Percent to Maximum” (PTM) scale, which converts responses indicated on scales of different sizes and terminology by calculating their mean and then translating these to a standard 100-point scale.¹⁹ Miller and Miller attempted to address the problem of differentiation in terminology and content meaning with controls using multiple regression analysis to compensate. While a quantitative adjustment may work to translate results into common numerical systems, the meaning behind those results cannot be successfully standardized. The true value of this methodology is that it allows for comparisons with similar services on a percentile basis. The converted common scale allows results to be compared within service sectors. This comparative measure lends more meaning to results than that which they would provide in and of themselves.

The main obstacle with this model is the lack of a true fixed reference point to compare results. The quantitative conversion is effective in translating varying scales: however, it is impossible to overcome the inherent content discrepancy with a quantitative conversion. No statistical conversion method can correct the problems for comparative analysis that result from using data collected from instruments with diverse terminology and items, or with a different ordering of items. Terminology used and items selected or omitted can have a profound impact on the data collected. For example, one survey assesses service items by asking respondents to indicate satisfaction levels; another instrument assesses service items by evaluating quality levels, while a third instrument asks respondents how effective service delivery was in their experience. It is apparent that the degree of variance between these data would be problematic.

Standardized Measurement Tool

The standardized survey can ensure comparable measures and generate normative data which are valuable to consider in assessing client satisfaction levels within the public service, especially between like services. On the other hand, there are some issues around a standardized instrument that require discussion. A standardized tool, once designed and in use, locks its users in, preventing any future adjustments from being made in an attempt to maintain relevance. To clarify, standardization, by definition, eliminates any tailoring of the instrument. Organizations can benefit from standardization in that it facilitates inter-organizational and intra-organizational cross-time comparisons. However, standardization limits the ability of organizations to obtain some of the specific information needed for service improvements.

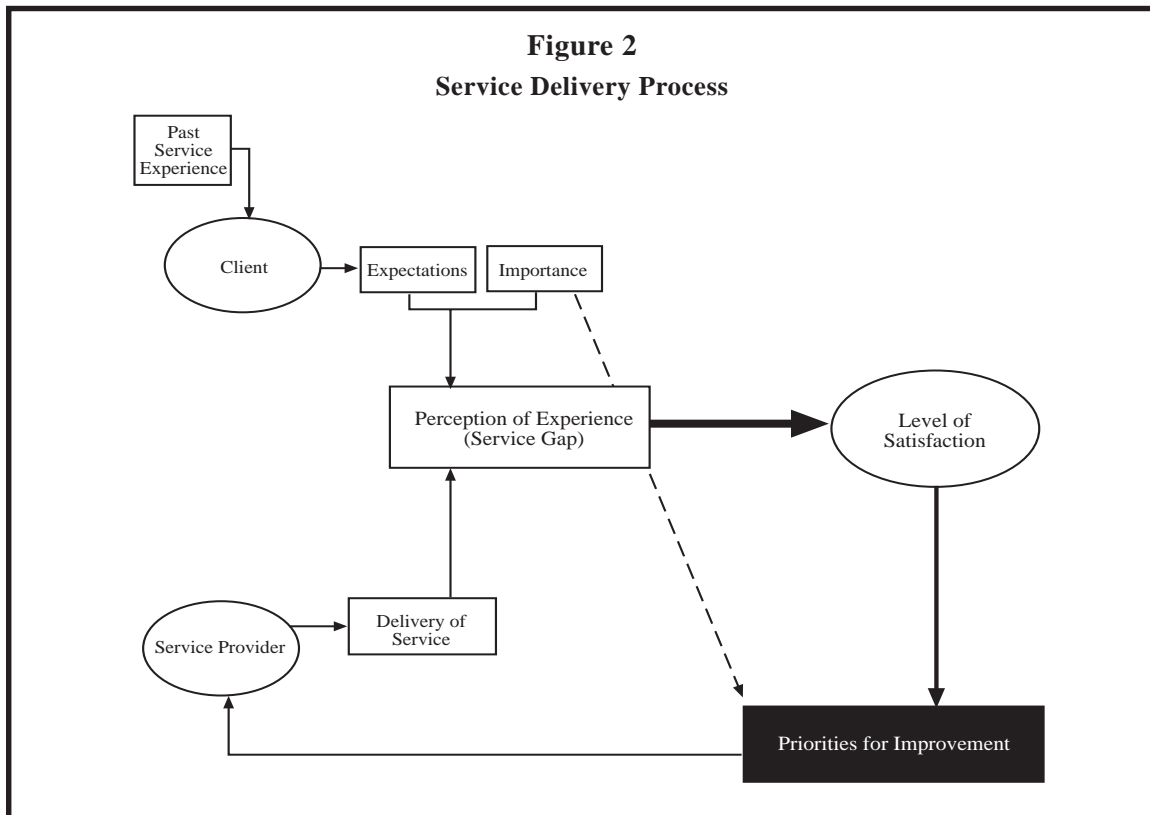
The solution proposed in this paper is to move towards a “common measurements tool” that provides consistent core items (i.e. standardized items) while facilitating customization by the organization in other areas. Specifically, organizations will be encouraged to develop additional customized items to use along with the core items. In addition, they will have flexibility in determining which core items to use. This customization will allow relevance to be maintained over time and will provide information specific to the organization.

2. Common Measurements – A Framework

In order to develop common measures, it is useful first to identify the primary elements of the service delivery process and the impact these factors have on client satisfaction. The internal and external variables of the service delivery process that should be measured are:

1. Client expectations
2. Perceptions of service experience
3. Level of importance
4. Level of satisfaction
5. Priorities for improvement

In order to build upon these five service elements as a foundation for the CMT, a conceptual model of their relationships has been developed (see Figure 2).



1. Client Expectations

When clients approach a service provider on either a voluntary or involuntary basis they do so with a variety of expectations that originate from many sources. A service gap is defined as the disparity between a client's expectations of a service and their perception of the service experience.²⁰ It is logical to infer that the existence of a negative service gap (i.e., when expectations exceed actual service delivery levels) leads to a less than satisfactory service experience. Conversely, when expectations are lower than the level of service delivery, a satisfactory service experience is realized. Thus, understanding the client expectations at the onset of the service experience is crucial to addressing service satisfaction.

Zeithaml's model of Customer Assessment of Service Quality²¹ identifies four key factors affecting a customer's (client's) expectations that are important for an organization to consider in relation to service quality: word of mouth, personal needs, past experience, and external communications by the service provider. For example, recent work on the creation and communication of service standards by many public organizations will likely influence expectations to a great degree. A thorough understanding of the expectations that clients bring to the service experience will provide an organization with vital information to plan for either managing expectations or targeting areas of improvement.

2. Perceptions of Experience: The Service Gap

It is important for the service provider to understand client perceptions of the experience in order to identify potential areas of improvement. For example, the client views the service staff as being unhelpful because they redirect them to another counter. The service staff perceive this response as helpful since the client has been redirected to the appropriate service personnel. On one level, the problem in this situation is a difference in perception of the same service experience. On another level, the problem may be with the actual service delivery. By identifying client perceptions, the problem may be addressed by the service agency. The organization may choose to clarify points of contact through communications or they may redesign their service delivery process to decrease the number of contacts required by the client in order to receive the service needed.

The disparity between client expectations and the perceived experience will result in what Zeithaml et al. have described as a service gap.²² Service gaps are directly related to the level of satisfaction experienced by a client.

3. Level of Importance

The perceived importance of a service (or its elements) is an essential service variable on two levels: as an antecedent of satisfaction and for planning purposes. As an antecedent of satisfaction, the client brings the level of importance to the service experience. As the client experiences service delivery, his or her perceptions of the experience are filtered by levels of

importance that ultimately result in a level of satisfaction. Frequency of use is also considered to be a factor that influences the level of importance. The following example may illustrate this logic.

A client visits a hospital to have a minor procedure conducted. The experience is perceived as negative by the client due to the following factors: excessive wait time, cold impersonal staff, numerous forms to fill out that are redundant and confusing, and a medical procedure which, by nature, is unpleasant. The client will never have to use this service again and sees this experience as negative but unimportant. The satisfaction level is rated as “poor” and the client is relieved the experience will never need to be repeated. Conversely, a client is rushed to the hospital with an unexpected medical problem and finds all of the above variables to be the same except that the level of importance and frequency differ. The client’s condition is serious and time is of the essence. The client, after having this negative experience, is informed that s/he will require a similar procedure at the same facility every six months for the rest of her/his life. The client rates the satisfaction level as “extremely poor” and s/he dreads the prospect of reusing the service.

Service variables recognized by the client in this example (timeliness, service staff interactions, and communication) were perceived as negative, but the level of importance can be isolated as specifically exacerbating the poor service satisfaction rating.

4. Level of Satisfaction

Clients react to a combination of their expectations: the importance of the service to them, and the actual service experience, resulting in an internalized response or perception. Satisfaction levels are a result of this perception and an internalized assessment process. Perception is an initial response and satisfaction is a judgment of that response in relation to one’s needs.

5. Priorities for Improvement

Measurement of service quality must go beyond exploring satisfaction levels in order to be useful for planning purposes. Information on how important the overall service and individual service items are to the client will promote well-informed planning decisions. Cross-analysis of satisfaction and importance variables will identify priorities for improvements and thus promote efficient allocation of resources. However, frequently when clients are asked to stipulate levels of importance they indicate that all or most service elements are important which is unmanageable for planning purposes. By requesting that clients select the top three (approximately) service priorities, a manageable portfolio can be provided for planning purposes. A satisfaction/importance cross-analysis matrix designed by Alan Dutka (Figure 3) is a tool that can be used in planning.²³ Earlier models have provided similar cross-analysis tables using slightly different terminology; this model seems to parallel the terminology and emphasis of the service delivery model more closely.

Satisfaction / Importance Matrix

Figure 3		
	<i>Satisfaction (Performance)</i>	
<i>Importance</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>High</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attributes that need attention – areas where priorities should be focused 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current organization strengths
<i>Low</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low Priority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unnecessary strengths – possible overkill

Adapted from: Alan Dutka. *AMA Handbook for Customer Satisfaction*. (Illinois: NTC Publishing Group, 1994).

DIMENSIONS OF SERVICE DELIVERY

The five variables of the service delivery process discussed thus far illustrate the broad types of information organizations need to consider in order to improve service. To ensure that information collected from client surveys is comprehensive, it is useful to delineate the service delivery process further by identifying the following service dimensions: responsiveness, reliability, access and facilities, communications, and cost. Appendix I lists the variables in each service dimension. Not all of the service dimensions will be relevant to all services. However, for the service dimensions that are relevant, it is recommended that information be gathered from each of the variables. For example, in assessing access and facilities, organizations are advised to gather information on client expectations, perceptions of the service experience, level of satisfaction, level of importance, and priorities for improvement.

As the five service elements are not equally weighted, the balance among them may differ from one service to another and from one point in time to another. There is no specific formula that can standardize the weighting of these variables.

Recent preliminary data from a national survey of citizens and clients revealed that at the present time the factors that drive citizen satisfaction relate primarily to aspects of service responsiveness and results. Specifically, the five key drivers of satisfaction have been found to

be (in order of importance): timely service, fair treatment, competent and knowledgeable staff, courteous staff, and getting the result you want.²⁴

Research conducted by Denhardt and Glaser indicated that among the controllable aspects of citizen perceptions of local government, responsiveness was the single most important factor.²⁵ In this study, responsiveness was comprised of two items; government was interested in citizens' expressed views and government could be trusted to honour citizen values.²⁶ Results from Denhardt and Glaser's study indicated that "local government must demonstrate that it is listening to what citizens have to say and indicate that they are willing to follow through with actions based on what it hears" and that if government can demonstrate that it is responsive to citizen demands it may receive a positive performance rating from its constituents.²⁷ Research conducted by Zeithaml et al. within five service sectors to explore which service dimensions were most critical to service quality revealed that reliability was consistently indicated.²⁸ Trends such as those identified by Denhardt and Glaser, the Citizen-Centred Service Network's national survey, and Zeithaml et al. should be considered seriously in survey work of this nature.

Responsiveness and Reliability

Responsiveness is defined as, "reacting readily, as to appeal."²⁹ This definition gets to the heart of responsiveness in relation to service satisfaction. 'Reacting' connotes that an action occurs as a result of some other occurrence, in this case, a client's need or an appeal made by the client. An appeal, as applied here, refers to a service gap recognized by the client and conveyed to the service provider. 'Reacting readily' implies that there is a timely element to responsiveness. It is safe to assume that clients want to feel that public services respond to their needs and expressed views: this is at the core of client satisfaction. *Reliability* has been defined as "the ability to provide what was promised, dependably and accurately."³⁰ The credibility of the service provider depends on this service dimension and thus can be considered as an essential factor of satisfaction.

Access and Facilities, Communication and Cost

The remaining three service delivery dimensions are also requisite to surveying client satisfaction levels. *Access and Facilities* refer to the approachability and ease with which service is provided. *Communication* in service delivery should provide the client with accurate, understandable and relevant information and with a means to be heard. *Cost* of services refer to user fees and value for services provided; this factor also encompasses related processes such as billing and payments.³¹

By deconstructing the service delivery process and fully understanding the internal and external variables and their relationships, a foundation is provided that allows methodological directions to be deliberated. The following section will be devoted to this task.

3. Common Measurements – Methodology

In designing any new tool there are numerous methodological considerations over which there is rarely complete agreement. In creating the Common Measurements Tool or CMT, an attempt was made to meet the needs of public service organizations at all levels and of all types. This section discusses the methodological decisions that were made and addresses issues related to how organizations will use the CMT.

CREATING THE COMMON MEASUREMENTS TOOL (CMT)

Appendix II contains the Common Measurements Tool. It is presented as a complete survey tool with areas marked where specific organizational information is required. Sections I – IV of the survey assess the individual service items against client expectations, experiences, satisfaction levels, levels of importance and priorities for improvement. In designing the CMT it became apparent that certain theoretical constructs did not translate comfortably into this practical tool. For example, variables within “responsiveness” and “reliability,” which are indexed separately in the service dimensions table (Appendix I), have been combined in the CMT. These two service dimensions have been treated collectively in the survey under the section entitled “Service/Product Delivery.” Separate sections in the instrument for the items related to responsiveness and reliability resulted in some confusion for the respondents in pre-testing. By combining these variables, the flow of questions seemed more natural and less confusing to respondents. In addition, the section headings “responsiveness” and “reliability” in the pre-test instrument held little meaning for the respondents and therefore were combined and renamed “Service/Product Delivery.” It became obvious in the design process that the format of the instrument and the language used, while based on a theoretical premise, needed to be geared to the audience – the respondents – in order to be effective in gathering meaningful data.

The majority of the questions fit into the prescribed two-variable/five-point scale item matrix. In addition, there are questions that are descriptive in nature located throughout the survey where required.

Clients are provided with a statement about service and are asked to:

- provide a satisfaction rating from a 5-point scale; and
- provide a rating of how important the individual item is to them.

Clients are then asked to indicate from the items within a given section what they want the service provider to improve upon.

Questions about perceptions of the experience and client expectations were more suited to descriptive responses and are included in each section where appropriate. Each section also requests overall satisfaction ratings of the service dimension (e.g., responsiveness) and allows the respondent to add qualitative comments.

Next, respondents are asked general questions about service delivery and their needs. Finally, in order to make the CMT useful for both internal and external clients, a demographic section is provided for each group.

Important elements in creating the CMT pertain to question design, response scales and size, question ordering, and preliminary design work.

Question Design

A crucial decision in designing any survey instrument is whether to seek quantitative or qualitative information, or both. The majority of questions in the CMT are quantitative in nature. Open-ended commentary sections have also been included in each individual service dimension section as well as at the end of the survey. The combination of both quantitative and qualitative information provides efficiency in use and statistical analysis options, combined with greater depth to the meaning of results due to supporting descriptive information.

Simple vocabulary and short questions are useful for designing effective questionnaires. Empirical evidence is available that indicates that short questions produce better data than longer ones.³² The CMT has been designed with this in mind.

The main advantage of open questions or areas for comments is that they allow respondents to elaborate or to provide information that may have been overlooked in the survey. The CMT has provided a commentary segment in each individual section to ensure that the respondents have the opportunity to qualify or elaborate on the more confined quantitative questions. In addition, there is a commentary section at the end of the survey for broad service feedback. While analyzing and coding qualitative data may be time-consuming, the information that may be generated can enrich the quantitative data.

Response Scales

A natural dichotomy (Agree/Disagree: Satisfied/Dissatisfied: Important/Unimportant) method of questioning forces respondents into one response or another. This would not capture the breadth of client expectations/perceptions of experiences/satisfaction level/level of importance. In addition, such dichotomous data would be limited in use.

It is almost impossible to describe in words more than five degrees of satisfaction and one must resort to some sort of scale that forces respondents to answer numerically. This is difficult for some people.³³

Various sources suggest listing items in a table that allows for cross assessments of numerous variables simultaneously. For example, the *AMA Handbook for Customer Satisfaction* suggests that survey formats can assess various service elements (satisfaction, importance) against service-specific items using a five-point scale combined within a common matrix.³⁴ The concept behind this format is that as the respondent considers a specific item, “courteousness of staff” for example, s/he can assess satisfaction and importance of this same item simultaneously.

The CMT has utilized this methodology and broadened the overall inquiry of client satisfaction to assess client perceptions of service delivery and their service expectations. Client perceptions of service delivery and their expectations do not fit into the common matrix described above, but are inherently more suited to descriptive questions. The collection of descriptive information will provide the organization with detailed responses that a more confined numerical methodology is not able to offer. For example, organizations will want to know specifically how long the service process took for their client and the amount of time they expected it to take. This provides the organization with actual time frames to respond to, either by: making a concerted effort to meet the client expectations when this is feasible, or by managing the expectation of the client.

Question Ordering

Surveys often begin with a broad question about a topic or issue and then ask more detailed questions. However, the opposite method is recommended when the issues are complex in nature or when the respondent may not have had to consider the issues in question for some time.³⁵ Asking service-specific questions prior to broad assessments is thought to provide the respondent with more background on which to base their replies.

A study conducted in Florida by Edwin Benton and John Daly was designed to assess the impacts that question ordering had on data collected.³⁶ This research looked at the impacts of the ordering of broad service questions and service-specific questions on results, specifically in citizen surveys conducted for elected officials and public managers.³⁷ Information was collected from citizen surveys conducted in two Florida cities in 1986 and 1987. The results indicated that when broad questions preceded service-specific items, results had higher negative or neutral ratings than when the same survey reversed this ordering. It seems logical to have the respondent evaluate specific elements of service as a prelude to giving a broad assessment on service provision. Such ordering of questions allows the respondent to warm up to the nature of inquiry and to respond to the broad assessment after having considered the elements of the broad service dimension.

The CMT concurs with this logic and presents service-specific items before broader service questions.

Question ordering should have a logical, intuitive flow that the respondent can follow. It is suggested that when a questionnaire does include a number of different topics, it is helpful to

prepare the respondent for a shift in attention by introducing the transition with a new heading or a transitional phrase about the section to come.³⁸ The CMT has provided an introductory sentence at the beginning of each section in order to conceptually frame the items to be assessed therein.

Preliminary Design Work

The CMT has been pre-tested on individuals who are able to respond as internal and external clients, as well as on managers who could potentially use the tool in their organization. In conducting pre-tests, an attempt was made to address voluntary as well as regulatory services (e.g., tax audits). This initial pre-testing of the CMT was intended to gauge whether the content and design are comprehensible and relevant. Representative clients and managers were asked to read each item, select a response, and then verbalize what their response meant to them. It was then possible to assess the extent to which the items were interpreted and responded to, as intended. It is recommended that organizations conduct pre-tests of their customized survey prior to implementation for the same reason.

USING THE COMMON MEASUREMENTS TOOL (CMT)

As previously noted, the CMT is distinct in nature from a true standardized tool. Rather than being a rigid set of items that must be administered in exactly the same way every time, it offers a set of items and response scales intended to form an item bank from which organizations work. It is anticipated that organizations may:

- use some of the common items along with other customized items;
- use different sub-sets of items from the CMT at different points in time; or
- use the entire CMT.

There are methodological issues that are critical to how organizations will customize the CMT. Three factors that need to be considered are: a) prescribed wording of items and response scales; b) prescribed ordering of items; and c) prescribed definitions of terms used. In all three of these areas consistency is the key concern.

The first factor, item wording, ensures that each respondent receives exactly the same stimuli. Without this, comparability between the results of different organizations is not possible. With this in mind, the items in the CMT are worded in a general way so that they are appropriate for the broadest possible groups of respondents. It is suggested that the wording of items only be altered to specify the service/product provided by the organization in order to ensure relevance and comprehension of the item. For example, organizations may want to include an exact reference to their service by replacing the words, “this service/product” with, for example, “driver’s licence renewal,” “passport,” “employment insurance claim.” This enables the organization to customize and utilize the CMT to assess particular areas of the service/products they deliver that is more focused than a broader organizational level of inquiry.

Common item ordering is also important. Evidence exists indicating that responses to certain kinds of questions vary depending on the items that precede and follow them.³⁹ To this end, it is recommended that when organizations use items from the CMT with others that are customized to fit particular needs, these additional questions should form a separate section of the survey, inserted just after the bulk of the CMT items and before the demographic items (see note on page 45 of Appendix II).

Finally, prescribed definitions and explanations are necessary to provide the respondents with consistent clarification in order to ensure the validity of the data collected. To facilitate this consistency, definitions of key terms are embedded within the CMT.

The section on demographics requires cautious customization by the organization using the CMT, specifically when applied to external clients. The CMT offers as many possible demographic items as an organization may need to know about. However, organizations should carefully consider the goals of their research prior to deciding on what demographic items are appropriate. The rationale behind this cautionary note is that some respondents may find certain questions invasive and therefore may choose to overlook all demographic items. For example, organizations may want to consider whether knowing if respondents are Aboriginal or not is really important to know. Including such an item that is not clearly relevant, may do more damage than good by decreasing the value of the data collected. Organizations should include only the items that they really need to know about.

The overriding consideration in the use of this tool is that organizations drawing items from the CMT do so in ways that meet their organizational needs while ensuring enough commonality of administration that inter-organizational comparisons are possible, when desired. Once an item is selected for use, it should be used exactly as presented in the CMT (i.e., the wording should be unchanged for the stem and response scale and the array of questions related to each service dimension – perception of experience, expectations, level of satisfaction, level of importance and priorities for improvement – should be included). Although locked into these elements of assessment, organizations nevertheless have the freedom to select which items to use from the five broad service dimensions (responsiveness, reliability, access and facilities, communications, and cost).

The following example may help clarify this process. A provincial agency may exclude items relating to cost, as the service it wishes to assess has no direct charge for clients. In addition, if its service is provided indirectly via various forms of correspondence (telephone, posted mail, e-mail, fax or internet) it will also ignore items related to access to service locations (e.g., parking, location, etc.). If it has introduced a new voice-mail service it may wish to add additional questions about its functionality (e.g., ease of use, appropriateness of the number of response levels, etc.). The critical factors are that all items selected from the CMT are used precisely as presented in this paper and that organizations obtain all the information they require.

It is anticipated that at a later date there will be a repository for CMT survey data, possibly at the Canadian Centre for Management Development (CCMD). This will facilitate inter-organizational comparisons and benchmarking, as desired by organizations. To this end, organizations are encouraged to use as many CMT items as appropriate to their needs.

Summary

It is hoped that this paper and the availability of the CMT will encourage more public organizations to engage in client satisfaction surveys, with a fuller understanding of the factors that determine client responses to public services. Ideally, public organizations will use this information to address the broad service gap identified by the Citizen-Centred Service Network as a result of this work.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are the result of this research project and its findings.

1. Client and citizen satisfaction surveys, although inextricably related, should be treated as distinct and implemented separately.
2. The Common Measurements Tool (CMT) can be used by public service organizations to build internal benchmarks, to set service standards and, for those that wish to do so, to facilitate intra-organizational comparisons of results between like service organizations.
3. In using the CMT, organizations should always gather information on client expectations, their perceptions of the service experience, levels of satisfaction with service aspects and levels of importance in order to gather data to aid in decision making. It is also critical to have clients indicate their priorities for improvements to help focus strategic planning directions.
4. Careful customization of the CMT by organizations is required prior to implementation.
5. Organizations can design and add descriptive questions to the CMT in the prescribed section in order to increase the relevance of the tool to their specific organization and the goals of their client satisfaction research.
6. Pre-testing the customized CMT needs to be conducted prior to implementation to increase its relevance and effectiveness.
7. Public organizations will ideally begin or continue to share their results and experiences with client satisfaction surveying in order to facilitate ongoing improvement to this critical research area. To this end, it is recommended that the Canadian Centre for Management Development become a repository of CMT data.

Endnotes

1. The terms citizen and client are used here in a broad, generic manner, citizen referring to a person who has full rights in a country or commonwealth, and client as a user of service. More precise definitions of these terms in relation to the project at hand are presented later in this document.
2. For a thorough analysis of the methodological problems with these comparative studies refer to Brian Marson and Geoff Dinsdale. *Citizen/Client Surveys: Dispelling Myths and Redrawing Maps: Draft*, Canadian Centre for Management Development, Ottawa. pages 8-12.
3. Service gap is defined as the difference between citizens' (customers) expectations and the actual perceived service that is delivered. See: Valarie Zeithaml, A. Parasuraman, and Leonard Berry, *Delivering Quality Service: Balancing Customer Perceptions and Expectations*. (New York: Free Press, 1990), p.20.
4. CCMD: July, 1997 Citizen-Centred Service Delivery Network Conference Report
5. CCMC: 1997-98 Research Plan: Citizen-Centred Service Delivery, Introduction
6. Brian Marson and Geoff Dinsdale. *Citizen/Client Surveys: Dispelling Myths and Redrawing Maps: Draft*, Canadian Centre for Management Development, Ottawa. p.19.
7. CCMD: 1997-98 Research Plan: Citizen-Centred Service Delivery, Project Three
8. Canada, Privy Council Office/Canadian Centre for Management Development, *A Strong Foundation: Report of the Study Team on Public Service Values and Ethics* (Ottawa: 1996), p. 38.
9. This can be applied to most private services, unless they are monopolistic in nature.
10. Canada, Privy Council Office/Canadian Centre for Management Development, *A Strong Foundation: Report of the Study Team on Public Service Values and Ethics* (Ottawa: 1996), p. 38.
11. Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, Quality Services Guide xii: *Who is the Client –A Discussion Paper* (Ottawa: June 1996).
12. UK Citizens Charter, *Service for the Citizen: The Agenda for Improvement, Report of the London Conference*, (London: 1994), p.101.
13. Nicholas Deakin and Anthony Wright. *Consuming Public Services*, (London: Routledge, 1990) p. 11.
14. The following reference utilizes the term “customer” in the manner that this paper uses the term “client”.
15. British Columbia. Service Quality BC Secretariat, Greg Conner. *Listening to Customers – Managing the Process: Workshop Design, Delivery and Evaluation* (Victoria: September, 1992), p.3.
16. Marson, Brian and Dinsdale, Geoff. *Citizen/Client Surveys: Dispelling Myths and Redrawing Maps*, Canadian Centre for Management Development, Ottawa pages 16-19.

17. *American Customer Satisfaction Index: The National Measure of Quality*, National Quality Research Institute, University of Michigan, School of Business Administration, 1994
18. Claes Fornell et al. "The American Customer Satisfaction Index: Nature, Purpose, and Findings," *American Customer Satisfaction Index*, 60, October 1996, p.8.
19. Thomas I. Miller and Michelle A. Miller, *Citizen Surveys: How to Do Them, How to Use Them, What They Mean*, (Washington; International City/County Management Association, 1991)
20. Zeithaml, Valarie et al. *Delivering Quality Service: Balancing Customer Perceptions and Expectations*. (New York: Free Press, 1990), p. 20.
21. Zeithaml, Valarie et al. *Delivering Quality Service: Balancing Customer Perceptions and Expectations*. (New York: Free Press, 1990), p. 23.
22. Valarie Zeithaml et al. *Delivering Quality Service: Balancing Customer Perceptions and Expectations*. (New York: Free Press, 1990), p. 20.
23. Alan Dutka. *AMA Handbook for Customer Satisfaction*. (Illinois: NTC Publishing Group, 1994), p. 135
24. Erin Research Inc. for the Citizen-Centred Service Network. *Have Your Say Priorities for Improving Government Services: Preliminary Report to the Citizen-Centred Service Network Quebec Forum*. May, 1998
25. Robert Denhardt and Mark Glaser. *Local Government Performance through the Eyes of Citizens*, (Delaware: Non-published, University of Delaware, Newark), p. 11
26. Robert Denhardt and Mark Glaser. *Local Government Performance through the Eyes of Citizens*, (Delaware: Non-published, University of Delaware, Newark), p. 11.
27. Robert Denhardt and Mark Glaser. *Local Government Performance through the Eyes of Citizens*, (Delaware: Non-published, University of Delaware, Newark), p. 12
28. The five service sectors surveyed included: credit-card customers, repair and maintenance services, long-distance telephone services, and banking services. It should also be noted here that data indicated that responsiveness followed very closely behind reliability in importance to customers. See Valarie Zeithaml, et al. *Delivering Quality Service: Balancing Customer Perceptions and Expectations*. (New York: Free Press, 1990), p. 27.
29. *Webster's New World Dictionary*, (New York: William Collins Publishers, Inc., 1979), p. 510.
30. British Columbia. Service Quality Secretariat, Joan Barton and Brian Marson. *Service Quality: An Introduction* (Victoria: 1991).
31. Costs, as used here, should be distinguished from indirect costs, such as taxes. The primary difference is that cost here is applied at the client level and not at the broader citizen level.
32. S. L. Payne. *The Art of Asking Questions*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), quoted in Peter H. Rossi, James D. Wright and Andy B. Anderson. *Handbook of Survey Research* (New York: Academic Press, 1983), p. 200.

33. Peter H. Rossi, James D. Wright and Andy B. Anderson. *Handbook of Survey Research* (New York: Academic Press, 1983), p. 209.
34. Alan Dutka. *AMA Handbook for Customer Satisfaction* (Illinois: NTC Publishing Group, 1994), p. 84.
35. Peter H. Rossi, James D. Wright and Andy B. Anderson. *Handbook of Survey Research* (New York: Academic Press, 1983), p. 222.
36. J. Edwin Benton and John L. Daly. "Measuring Citizen Evaluations: The Question of Question Order Effects," *Public Administration Quarterly* Winter 1993.
37. J. Edwin Benton and John L. Daly. "Measuring Citizen Evaluations: The Question of Question Order Effects," *Public Administration Quarterly* Winter 1993.
38. Peter H. Rossi, James D. Wright and Andy B. Anderson. *Handbook of Survey Research*. (New York: Academic Press, 1983), p. 221.
39. Peter H. Rossi, James D. Wright and Andy B. Anderson. *Handbook of Survey Research* (New York: Academic Press, 1983), p. 197.

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Appendix I – Service Dimensions

<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Variables</i>
<i>Responsiveness</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• timely delivery of service• number of contacts to receive service• waiting time• timely reaction to expressed concerns Service Staff are: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• empathetic• courteous• helpful• skilful and competent• equipped with up-to-date information• respectful• flexible• fair• able to protect my privacy/confidentiality
<i>Reliability</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• provided needed service• provided what was promised• adhered to policy and standards• minimal error rate
<i>Access & Facilities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• convenient location• physical access to building• comfort of offices and waiting areas• adequate parking• hours of service• appearance, clarity and location of signs• ease of obtaining appointments• telephone access• use of technology• variety of access modes
<i>Communication</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• questions were answered• availability of information• plain language• consistency of information/advice• services delivered in official languages• ease of understanding information, documents• ease of understanding procedures
<i>Cost</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ease of billing/payment• reasonable cost

Appendix II

Common Measurements Tool

INSTRUCTIONS TO ORGANIZATIONS

At first glance, the Common Measurements Tool (CMT) looks like a “ready-to-use” client satisfaction survey, but it is not. The CMT, as it exists here, is lengthier than most organizations would want for a client satisfaction survey. Customization by the user is critical to its effectiveness in implementation. The CMT provides a comprehensive collection of potential survey items that public service organizations may select from in designing a client satisfaction survey.

Before proceeding with customization, there are a few methodological recommendations that organizations should consider. The CMT was designed to facilitate consistency and comparative analysis among similar public organizations, who choose to use it. In addition, the CMT will offer organizations an easily accessible survey system to use to build benchmarks within their own organization. This is achieved by using the tool in the same way repeatedly and then comparing results.

For the aforementioned reasons, it is important to maintain the measurement scale and the wording of the items that are selected by the organization. In addition, item ordering should also be maintained. The CMT has a prescribed section where organizations can add questions unique to their organization – placement of these questions should also be maintained in the designated section to decrease the effects these questions have on the other items included in the survey.

The customization process will involve the following steps:

1. Define the goals of your client satisfaction survey
2. Review the CMT in its entirety
3. Decide which items are relevant to your organization and the goals of your study
4. Identify any questions you want to ask that may not be included in the CMT
5. Design those questions and add into the designated section for additional questions
6. Customize the wording of the Introduction to suit your organization
7. Customize the wording (service/product) throughout the CMT to make it relevant to your organization and the specific service transaction the survey applies to.

It is recommended that organizations conduct pre-testing of the customized tool before implementing the survey. Pre-testing will indicate where any adjustments might be necessary before implementing the survey, avoiding errors that clients will be exposed to.

CLIENT SATISFACTION SURVEY

This client satisfaction survey is intended to provide (organization fills in name) with information that will assist in better serving your needs. This survey provides you, the client, with the opportunity to tell us how we are doing and how we can improve. We are interested in what you have to say about our service/product and value the time you take to complete this survey. Thank you!

We are surveying clients who have used our service in the last (organization fills in time period). Participants are selected on a random basis (or organization fills in otherwise). The information collected in this survey will be used by (organization) to better understand your needs and help us make improvements to the way we deliver our service/product. Your responses will remain anonymous as we will be summarizing all the information we receive.

This survey asks questions about many aspects of your experience with our services/product. These include how you were served, how reliable our service/product was, how easy it was to access, and others.

When you have completed this survey please (method of return specified by organization, i.e. place it in the box provided, mail it into our office with the self-addressed envelop) by (fill in date).

If you have any questions about this survey and the use of this information, feel free to contact (fill in contact person) at (fill in contact number).

Section I – Service/Product Delivery

This section asks about the way this service/product was provided to you by the service staff.

For the following questions (#1 – 10), please circle the one response that best describes your experience.

1. Have you received the service/product or is the service delivery process continuing at this time?

- a) service/product received → **go on to question #2.**
 b) service/product delivery in process or ongoing → **go to question #6.**

2. How long did it take to receive the service/product – from the time you first contacted the organization that provided the service/product until you first received service/product?

Note to Organizations: The intervals for question 2 & 3 can refer to **minutes, hours, days or weeks** depending on the nature of the organization using the instrument.

0-4 5-9 10-14 15-19 20-24 25-29 30+

3. What is an acceptable amount of time to receive this service/product?

0-4 5-9 10-14 15-19 20-24 25-29 30+

4. How many contacts did it take for you to receive this service/product? A “contact” is each different phone call, e-mail, posted letter, fax, or office visit.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8(+)

5. What is an acceptable number of contacts required to receive this service/product?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8(+)

6. Did you visit a service location to access the service/product?

- a) **Yes** → **go to question #7**
 b) **No** → **go to question #9 on next page**

7. How long did you have to wait at the service location before having contact with the staff who provided the service/product? **Responses are in minutes.**

1-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 21-30 31-45 46-59 60(+)

8. What is an acceptable amount of time to wait at the service location before having contact with staff who provide the service/product? **Responses are in minutes.**

1-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 21-30 31-45 46-59 60(+)

9. How many different people did you have to deal with in order to get what you needed?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 or more

10. What is an acceptable number of people to deal with in order to get what you need?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 or more

11. In the end, did you get what you needed from our organization?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) I got part of what I needed

12. Was the service/product provided without error?

- a) Yes
- b) No

If you answered **NO to the question # 12**, please comment on the errors you experienced in receiving our service/product.

Please circle the response that best describes your satisfaction with the following aspects of our service/product.

	How satisfied were you with this aspect of our service/product? 1 = Very Dissatisfied 2 = Dissatisfied 3 = Neutral 4 = Satisfied 5 = Very Satisfied N/A – Not Applicable	How important is this aspect of our service/product to you? 1 = Very Unimportant 2 = Unimportant 3 = Neutral 4 = Important 5 = Very Important N/A – Not Applicable
A. Time required to deliver the service/product.	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
B. Number of contacts with the organization required to receive the service/product.	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
C. Waiting time at the service location.	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
D. Number of people dealt with to get the service/product.	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
E. The service was provided in a fair and equitable manner.	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
F. It was clear what to do if I had a problem.	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
Service staff were:		
G. Courteous	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
H. Helpful	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
I. Good listeners	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
J. Competent	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
K. Had up-to-date information	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
L. Respectful	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
M. Flexible	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
N. Met my safety and security needs	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
O. Protected my privacy/confidentiality	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
P. Overall, how satisfied were you with the way the service/product was provided by the service staff?	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	
Q. If we could only improve in three of the above areas, which should we focus on? Please circle three.		
	A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O	

13. Please provide us with any further comments you may have about the people who served you.

Section II – Access & Facilities

Please circle the answer that best describes your experience in these areas.

	How satisfied were you with this aspect of our service/product? 1 = Very Dissatisfied 2 = Dissatisfied 3 = Neutral 4 = Satisfied 5 = Very Satisfied N/A – Not Applicable	How important is this aspect of our service/product to you? 1 = Very Unimportant 2 = Unimportant 3 = Neutral 4 = Important 5 = Very Important N/A – Not Applicable
The facility that provided this service/product:		
A. Was easily accessible by telephone	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
B. Was conveniently located	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
C. Had adequate hours of service	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
D. Had adequate parking	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
E. Was easily accessible (e.g., there were no barriers to physically entering and using the buildings)	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
F. Had offices and waiting areas that were comfortable	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
G. Had signs that were easy to locate	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
H. Had signs that were easy to understand	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
I. Appointments with service staff were easy to make	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
J. Offered various methods of access (i.e., fax, internet, telephone, e-mail)	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
K. Overall, how satisfied were you with the accessibility of the service/product?	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	
L. Overall, how satisfied were you with the facilities for the service/product?	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	
M. If we could only improve in three of the above areas, which should we focus on? Please circle three.		
A B C D E F G H I J		

Client Satisfaction Surveying: Common Measurements Tool

1. If you found that the service location was not convenient, where would you like the facility to be located?

2. What are your preferred ways of accessing this service?
Please write in the numbers 1, 2, and 3 next to three of the items below to indicate your preferences.

- In Person
- Telephone
- Fax
- Internet
- E-mail
- Posted mail
- Courier
- Other _____

3. Do regular office hours meet your needs for accessing this service/product?
Regular office hours are defined here as Monday to Friday (approximately 08:30 am – 4:30 pm).
- a) Yes
 - b) No

If you answered **NO** to question # 3 please answer the following question:
If regular office hours as described above do not meet your needs, and we were able to extend hours, what is your preference for extending office hours? (**Circle one response**)

- a) Open office earlier in morning one day a week (07:00 am for example)
- b) Keep office open later one evening a week (07:00 pm for example)
- c) Open office one day during weekend
- d) Other suggestions (fill in blank) _____

4. Please provide us with further comments that you may have about the access and facilities through which you received the service/product. (For example, do you have any special needs that were not met?)

Section III – Communication

To receive this service/product a number of aspects of our communications with you may have affected your experience. Please circle the response that best describes your service experience.

	How satisfied were you with this aspect of our service/product? 1 = Very Dissatisfied 2 = Dissatisfied 3 = Neutral 4 = Satisfied 5 = Very Satisfied N/A – Not Applicable	How important is this aspect of our service/product to you? 1 = Very Unimportant 2 = Unimportant 3 = Neutral 4 = Important 5 = Very Important N/A – Not Applicable
In receiving this service/product:		
A. My questions were answered.	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
B. The information that I needed was available.	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
C. I received consistent information/advice.	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
D. Written and verbal language was clear (e.g., not complicated).	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
E. I had a choice of English or French languages	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
F. Service staff were easy to understand.	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
G. Documents and other information were easy to understand.	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
H. Forms were easy to understand and fill out.	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
I. Procedures were straight forward and easy to understand.	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
J. It was easy to find out how to get the service.	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
K. I was informed of everything I had to do in order to get the service/product.	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
L. How satisfied were you with our communications?	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	
M. If we could only improve in three of the above areas, which should we focus on? Please circle three.		
	A B C D E F G H I J K	

Client Satisfaction Surveying: Common Measurements Tool

1. Which of the following would be the best way(s) for us to communicate with you about our service/product? **Circle as many as you wish.**

- a) media advertisements (e.g., newspapers, radio, TV)
- b) pamphlets/booklets in the mail
- c) posters
- d) information on the internet
- e) e-mail
- f) other (fill in blank) _____

2. Please provide us with further comments that you may have about the communications that supported the product/service you received.

Section IV – Cost

To receive this service/product you paid a fee (e.g., license, registration, toll fee). Please circle the response that best describes your service experience relating to cost.

	How satisfied were you with this aspect of our service/product? 1 = Very Dissatisfied 2 = Dissatisfied 3 = Neutral 4 = Satisfied 5 = Very Satisfied N/A – Not Applicable	How important is this aspect of our service/product to you? 1 = Very Unimportant 2 = Unimportant 3 = Neutral 4 = Important 5 = Very Important N/A – Not Applicable
A. Billing for the service/product was timely.	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
B. The billing process was straight forward.	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
C. The method of payment was convenient.	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
D. The payment period was reasonable.	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
E. The cost was reasonable.	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
F. Overall, how satisfied were you with the costing of the service/product you received?	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	

G. If we could only improve in **one** of the above areas, which should we focus on? **Please circle one.**

A B C D E

1. What is your preferred method of payment? **(Please circle one)**

- a) Cash
- b) Cheque
- c) Debit Card
- d) Credit Card

2. The most reasonable payment period would be within: **(Circle one)**

- a) 1 week
- b) 2 weeks
- c) 3 weeks
- d) 4 weeks
- e) 5 weeks
- f) More that 5 weeks

Client Satisfaction Surveying: Common Measurements Tool

3. An acceptable range of cost for this service/product would be:
(Fill in blanks) \$ _____ to \$ _____ .

4. Please provide us with further comments that you may have about the cost of the service/product you received.

Section V – General Questions

Please circle the answer that best describes your use of this service/product.

1. If you have used this service more than once, how often do you use it?

First time users → go to question #3

Every:

- a) week or less
- b) 2 weeks
- c) month
- d) 2-5 months
- e) 6-11 months
- f) year
- g) 2-5 years

2. When was the last time you used this service?

In the last:

- a) week or less
- b) 2 weeks
- c) month
- d) 2-5 months
- e) 6-11 months
- f) year
- g) 2-5 years

3. My use of this service was:

- a) a legal requirement → go to question #6
- b) my choice → go to question #4

4. Will you use this service again?

- a) Yes → go to question #6
- b) No → go to question #5

5. Please tell us why you will not use this service again.

6. Did you have any of these problems while getting the service? **Check all that apply.**

- I didn't know where to look
- I couldn't find the service in the Blue Pages of the telephone book
- I got bounced around from one person to another
- Telephone lines were busy
- I had trouble with automatic telephone answering systems or voice mail
- I was given incorrect information
- I got conflicting information from different people
- I had to travel too great a distance
- Parking was difficult
- No one took time to explain things to me
- Other (fill in blank) _____

Please circle the response that best describes how much you agree or disagree with the following general statements about this service/product.

	1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree N/A – Not Applicable
A. This organization was responsive to my needs.	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
B. The staff who served me did an excellent job.	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
C. When I needed this service, I knew where to go to get it.	1 2 3 4 5 N/A

Please circle the number that best describes your overall level of satisfaction with this service/product delivery.

	1 = Very Dissatisfied 2 = Dissatisfied 3 = Neutral 4 = Satisfied 5 = Very Satisfied
D. Overall, how satisfied were you with this service/product?	1 2 3 4 5

7. If we could only improve **three** areas of this service/product delivery, in which **three** of the following should we make improvement upon?

Please write in the numbers 1, 2, and 3 to indicate the first, second and third most important areas for improvement next to the three items you select.

- ___ amount of time to receive service/product
- ___ number of contacts required to receive service/product
- ___ waiting time in line ups
- ___ waiting time on telephone
- ___ waiting time for mailed response
- ___ more methods to access service/product (e.g., internet, email, fax)
- ___ adequate office hours
- ___ convenience of office location
- ___ courtesy of service staff
- ___ skill/competence of service staff
- ___ ease of accessing information about the service/product
- ___ simple forms
- ___ clear instructions/directions
- ___ accurate and consistent information
- ___ dependability of the service
- ___ convenient payment methods
- ___ reasonable cost for service/product
- ___ other (fill in blank) _____

***Note: This is where organizations can place additional customized items.**

Section VI – Information About You (For External Clients):

We would like to know more about our clients to better understand your needs for this service/product. This information is used to assist our organization in planning improvements in the way we delivery our service/product to you. We would appreciate it if you would answer the following questions. This information will be **confidential** – we have no way of identifying any specific people who fill in these questions.

Please circle response that most closely describes your situation.

1. Gender

- a) Female
- b) Male

2. Age

- a) 18-24 yrs
- b) 25-34 yrs
- c) 35-49 yrs
- d) 50-64 yrs
- e) 65+ yrs

3. Please indicate the type of residence you live in.

- a) Single Family Dwelling
- b) Multi-Family Dwelling (townhouse, duplex)
- c) Secondary suite in a single family residence
- d) Apartment
- e) Other

4. Do you:

- a) Rent
- b) Own

5. Please indicate the type of household in which you live.

- a) Couple with no dependent children
- b) Couple with one dependent child or more
- c) Single parent with one dependent child or more
- d) Single adult
- e) More than 1 single adult sharing a residence
- f) Extended family
- g) Other _____

6. Are you presently employed?
- a) Yes —▶ go to question #7
 - b) No —▶ go to question #10
7. If you are employed, do you work?
- a) Full time (35 or more hours/wk)
 - b) Part time (less than 35 hours/wk)
8. What is your primary occupation?
- a) Homemaker
 - b) Manager, executive, business owner
 - c) Office work, sales, service
 - d) Professional
 - e) Self-employed
 - f) Student
 - g) Trades, factory worker
 - h) Other
9. Please circle the appropriate letter to indicate the type of organization in which you work.
- a) Municipal government
 - b) Provincial or Territorial government
 - c) Federal government
 - d) Other publicly funded organization, e.g., public health system, school system, university, courts, etc.
 - e) None of the above
10. If you are not employed, are you:
- a) Retired
 - b) Student
 - c) Receiving Employment Insurance
 - d) Other _____
11. Which of the following do you have personal access to? **Circle all that apply.**
- a) Computer
 - b) Internet
 - c) Fax machine
 - d) Electronic Mail (E-mail)
12. What formal education do you have, to date?
- a) Some public or high school
 - b) Completed high school
 - c) Some post-secondary
 - d) Completed college or university
 - e) Graduate or professional degree

13. What is your approximate total household income, before taxes? *Your household includes all members of your family who are living with you.*

- a) Under \$10,000
- b) \$10,000 to \$19,999
- c) \$20,000 to 29,999
- d) \$30,000 to \$49,999
- e) \$50,000 to 69,999
- f) \$70,000 to 89,000
- g) \$90,000 or more

14. Are you a member of a visible minority group?

- a) Yes
- b) No

15. Are you Aboriginal?

- a) Yes
- b) No

16. Where do you live?

(organization inputs relevant options here) (e.g., within community, region, province).

17. How long have you lived in Canada/Province/Region/Municipality/Community?

(the organization selects the appropriate variable)

- a) All my life
- b) Ten years or more
- c) Less than ten years

Section VII – Information About You and Your Organization: (For Internal Clients)

We are collecting information about you and your organization to bring more meaning to the answers you have provided us with. This information is used to assist our organization in planning improvements in the way we deliver our service/product to you.

Please fill in blanks.

1. The name of your organization. _____
2. The name of the division or area in which you work. _____
3. Your position/title. _____
4. Length of time you have worked in this position (in number of months). _____
5. The length of time you have worked for this employer (in number of months). _____
6. The number of people who report directly to you. _____

Section VIII – We are Most Interested in Your Comments

Please write any other comments you have about this government service/product. Feel free to elaborate on questions from the survey or any other thoughts you wish to convey relating to the delivery of service to you.

Thank you for providing this information!