



THE NATIONAL CITIZEN SURVEY™  
**PERSPECTIVES**

A Newsletter About Survey Research for Local Government Managers and Elected Officials

## How to Sign Up for The NCS™

If you have an introductory packet from ICMA, you can fill out the enrollment form and send it to National Research Center, Inc; please include a check for \$4,100 which is half of the Basic Service (\$8,200) at that time. Your check initiates The NCS™ process. You will be added to the next available Class of participants, unless you specify a different Class. NRC will send a packet of information\*\* containing several FAQ sheets, background information on The NCS™, your timeline and a Worksheet Packet. The Worksheet Packet will guide you through the steps to customize your survey, write policy questions, and choose Add-On options where needed.

If you do not have the Introductory Packet from ICMA, you can use the enrollment form on the back of this newsletter.

You can also contact Heather Locke at NRC for additional information or an invoice at any time: heather@n-r-c.com.

\*\*We are happy to get materials to you even faster by sending electronic (PDF) copies of all files if you prefer. Just let us know!

## Enrollment Form

Last Name \_\_\_\_\_ First Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_ Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_ City (abbreviate if necessary) \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

To order, send this completed form with payment to:

The National Citizen Survey™ • National Research Center • Attn: Heather Locke • 3005 30th St. • Boulder, CO 80301

## Pricing

PRODUCT	PRICE	DESCRIPTION
Basic	\$8,200	
Spanish	\$1,400	Includes Spanish paragraph on cover letters asking those who wish to complete the survey in Spanish to contact the jurisdiction and request Spanish copy of survey. Jurisdiction will be mailed envelopes – outbound and return – and surveys to mail out to those individuals
3,000 out	\$6,000	Mailing is of 3,000 instead of 1,200.
Custom norms	\$1,000	Through worksheet options, jurisdiction selects criteria for set of custom norms. Custom norms will be provided alongside national norms in report tables. Graphs will include either custom or national norms but not both.
One open end	\$1,250	Includes one open-ended question added to survey. Responses will be categorized and reported in a table under separate cover, accompanied by a complete list of verbatim responses.
Compare prior non-NCS results	\$1,700	Tables include comparisons to previous years' service evaluation ratings in jurisdiction – up to three previous years.
Compare prior NCS results	\$0	Comparisons included in report of results.
Demographic crosstabs	\$800	Crosstabs of questions 1-15 by 4 demographic variables on survey to be provided under separate cover from report.
Geographic crosstabs	\$800	Crosstabs of questions 1-15 by geographic variable to be provided under separate cover from report.
Phone data collection	\$6,000	400 completed interviews
On-site Presentation	\$2,300	Presentation of results to Council or department heads. Cost includes travel expenses.

## Public Trust

It's not about you. It's about what you accomplish.

*City Manager: "Mirror, Mirror on the wall, who's the best public official of them all?"*

*Mirror: "Who you lookin' at, Big Shot? It's not about you. Go look out the window! It's about what you do."*

You may be the rare manager with the fairytale job where stardust puts smiles on your constituents' faces and simple answers spill magically from your crystal ball. But most public administrators face a hard-knocks reality crowded by well-intended residents who struggle with tough questions and rarely agree on any answer. When council or the board meets for hours on Tuesday night (or Wednesday or Thursday, fill in the blank) over some contentious issue and public consensus seems as elusive as that soft pillow on your

bed, you may be asking yourself if there is anything you ever could do to smooth the rough road to consent. There is. And the good news is that it's all within your grasp. And your job description.



We have found a strong, direct and consistent link between delivery of high quality local government services and public trust. Anyone who watched the unnerving aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans probably already suspects that such

a link exists. Our evidence predates the disaster and comes from public opinion surveys conducted in almost 100 cities, counties and towns across the U.S. that participated in The National Citizen Survey™ (The NCS). On citizen surveys, we ask residents questions about public trust. Residents tell us how good a job local government administrators are doing to provide value for taxes collected, whether public officials seem to listen to residents or welcome citizen input and generally what residents think about the overall direction of local government. Responses to these questions about public trust generally aren't so much a mirror that reflects what residents think of local government officials, but answers to those questions are a window into what residents think about the quality of life of their community and the services they receive.

(continued on page 2)



## We are pleased to announce...

As part of the updating process, we have included several new question parts to The National Citizen Survey™. These include rating your jurisdiction as a place to work, rating access to affordable quality food, education opportunities, overall image/reputation of your community and overall quality of new development in your community. Other questions ask whether the following are problems in your community: Absence of communications from the XYZ of ABC translated into languages other than English, unwanted local businesses and toxic waste or other environmental hazard(s).

**Q:** I know that my local government will require a lot of time, extra customizing and may need to add more questions that the materials say is part of the service. I am trying to determine if The National Citizen Survey™ will be right for my community. How customizable is “semi-customizable”?

**A:** The National Citizen Survey™ (The NCS™) has been tested and works for a majority of jurisdictions, especially as a cost-effective way to reach citizens. As a semi-customizable survey instrument, The NCS™ includes many items that are part of living in a community such as quality of life, perceptions of safety, service delivery and demographic questions. In our case, “semi-customizable” means that jurisdictions are encouraged to remove items from the survey that do not apply, such as a community in Florida removing “snow removal” from the list of services. We also encourage jurisdictions to ask 3 policy-related questions, specific to their local community that range from the importance of funding certain services over others or support for new building projects.

The NCS™ has room to accommodate most jurisdictions interested in taking the pulse of their citizens on most broad aspects of living and working in their communities, however we realize that The NCS™ is not for everyone. If your jurisdiction is clear that it needs to ask a number of questions in addition to the space available for policy questions on the survey, if you know that you will require The NCS™ staff to join multiple conference calls and/or meetings or if you think you may require more project management than usual from The NCS™ staff – ask us! We would be happy to let you know if your needs fall into what The NCS™ can do.

How do we know this? In our database of responses to The NCS more than 50,000 residents in 88 jurisdictions have evaluated overall quality of community life and quality of service delivery from local governments on the same survey where they report their trust of public officials and government. We have the unique ability to determine if quality of life and quality of service delivery ratings relate to ratings of public trust. They do. Highly positive ratings of overall quality of life and quality of local government service delivery

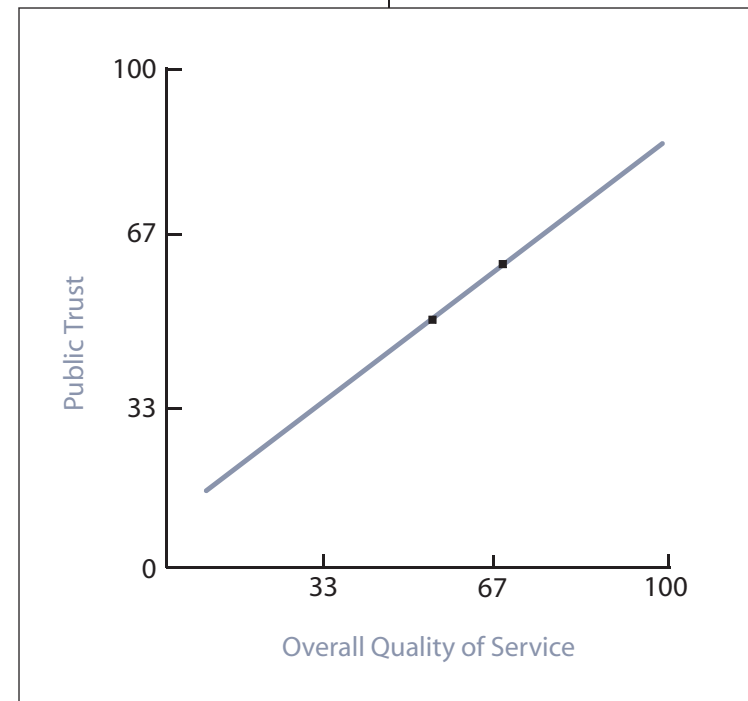
are closely related to high ratings of public trust. The opposite is true, too. If quality of life ratings or service delivery ratings are not thought well of, public trust is damaged. For example, say a local government whose services are well received garners an average rating of 70 on a scale where 0=poor; 33=fair; 67=good and 100=excellent. The predicted average rating for public trust in that community is 65 (or “good”) on the 100 point scale. Conversely, a local government whose services are not well received, say, garnering an

average rating of only 50 is predicted to achieve average ratings for public trust of only 53 on the 100 point scale (above “fair,” but below “good”).

### Overall Quality of Services

It is important to realize that neither resident mood nor recent community crises primarily drive how strongly residents trust their local government. Public trust grows from consistent, noticeable success in service delivery among other attributes such as communication and transparency. This information is important because whether or not you are trusted will likely affect residents’ decisions to support new policies or tax increases that you may recommend. It is simultaneously exhilarating and daunting to realize that what you do to deliver quality services and to make your community livable could make or break the deal on policies that staff and council are eager to establish.

So don’t worry so much about your public speaking skills, who you annoyed at the water cooler, the psychological effects of the wall color in council chambers or the cut of your profile in the morning mirror. It’s all about what you and your team produce for the residents you serve. It sounds kind of old fashioned, but if you can do that job well, you won’t have to consult a fortune teller. Good news naturally will follow.



The National Citizen Survey™ (The NCS™) is a cost effective system for conducting comprehensive surveys of local resident and an important benchmarking tool that allows comparison among communities. The NCS™ begins with a customizable survey with core questions important to your community.

National Research Center, Inc. (NRC) is one of the leading survey research firms in the United States, focusing on the information needs of the public sector.

The principles of NRC have authored several articles about citizen survey research methods, as well as a book on the methods of citizen surveying *Citizen Surveys: How To Do Them, How To Use Them, What They Mean* published by the International City/County Management Association in April, 2000.

The International City/County Management Association (ICMA) is the professional and educational organization representing appointed managers and administrators in local governments throughout the world.

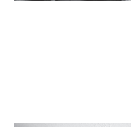
The National Citizen Survey™ is the latest in a long series of initiatives created to further public trust and confidence in local government and improve the management of local government services.



**Thomas I Miller, Ph.D.** is the president of National Research Center, Inc. He received a Ph.D. in research and evaluation methods from the University of Colorado. He has worked in state and local government since 1977. With Michelle Kobayashi, he wrote, *Citizen Surveys: How To Do Them, How To Use Them, What They Mean*, published in 2000 by the International City and County Management Association, Washington, D.C. Tom founded National Research Center, Inc. in 1994. He has designed, overseen and written results of hundreds of research and evaluation projects and presented his findings to a wide variety of audiences, both academic and lay. He has written about survey research in journals devoted to public management, including *Public Administration Review*, *Journal of the American Planning Association*, *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, *Planning Commissioners Journal*, *Management Science and Policy Analysis and Governing*. Believing that low-cost, quality surveys are an important part of local government management, Tom has spent years developing The National Citizen Survey™ questionnaire and protocols.



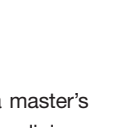
**Heather Callahan Locke, M.A.** is The National Citizen Survey™ Manager. Heather earned a master’s degree in Religious Studies from the University of Colorado at Boulder, with an emphasis in Eastern religious traditions, and undergraduate degrees in Religion and French. Her experience is in research, management, coordination, customer service and teaching. Heather manages all of The NCS™ surveys; including working closely with interested jurisdictions and those who participate. She oversees the survey process through questionnaire customization, data collection and report writing, as well as post-report consultation on interpretation of results and next steps.



**Erin Caldwell, MSPH** is a senior research associate at NRC. Erin has earned a master’s degree in public health with an emphasis in research methods and statistics. Erin has over 10 years experience as a senior researcher and research manager. She has designed and conducted scores of citizen surveys, needs assessments, policy studies and program evaluations. Erin helped to develop The National Citizen Survey™.



**Shannon Hayden, M.A.**, senior analyst, earned her undergraduate degree in Sociology from The Colorado College and a master’s degree in Educational Psychology (emphasis on research and evaluation methodology) from the University of Colorado at Denver and Health Sciences Center. Shannon has been involved in dozens of citizen surveys at NRC, working as a project manager and on all aspects of the projects, including survey instrument development, overseeing data collection and analyzing and reporting the data. She helped develop The National Citizen Survey™ and oversaw the Beta Site testing of this project. Her background includes a number of years in marketing. She continues to contribute technical assistance and analysis to The NCS™.



**Damema Zoss, B.A.**, The National Citizen Survey™ Research Assistant, earned her undergraduate degree in Political Science from the University of Vermont. Her experience and skills include marketing, management and customer service. Damema assists in all aspects of The NCS™ from customizing surveys to data analysis and report creation and works tirelessly to maintain the normative database.

1. Copy of Citizen Surveys: *How To Do Them, How To Use Them, What They Mean*
2. Customized survey form and mailing envelopes with jurisdiction name, logo, and local contact
3. Choice of services to be evaluated by residents
4. Addition of three optional questions
5. Three mailings to 1,200 randomly selected households: pre-survey postcard and two mailings of the survey instrument
6. A margin of error of approximately +/-5 percentage points
7. Data entry and cleaning
8. Statistical analysis of survey results
9. Written report illustrated with tables and graphs
10. Comparative norms for service evaluations
11. Technical assistance by phone and email
12. Add-on options for further reports and customization
13. Debriefing call
14. Certificate of survey authenticity signed by the President of ICMA, Bob McNeil and the President of NRC, Thomas I Miller, Ph.D.

## Calendar of New Classes

October-December 2005, January-March 2006

We have “Classes” or groups of participants beginning at the start of each month. In order to be considered for a certain Class, we need to receive your enrollment form and check approximately two weeks prior to the start date. We will consider “late arrivals” contingent on space available in each Class. Feel free to try, we are happy to work with your schedule as much as possible!

<b>October 2005</b> Start: October 3 Data collection: Nov 14-Dec 19 Draft reports: January 9, 2006 Completion of The NCS: Jan. 30, 2006	<b>December 2005</b> Start: November 28 Data collection: Jan 17-Feb 27 Draft reports: March 20 Completion of The NCS: April 3	<b>February 2006</b> Start: January 3 Data collection: March 13-April 17 Draft reports: May 8 Completion of The NCS: May 29
<b>November 2005</b> Start: October 31 Data collection: Jan 3-Feb 9 ** Draft reports: Feb. 27 Completion of The NCS: March 30	<b>January 2006</b> Start: January 3 Data collection: Feb 14-Mar 21 Draft reports: April 11 Completion of The NCS: May 2	<b>March 2006</b> Start: February 27 Data collection: April 10-May 15 Draft reports: June 5 Completion of The NCS: June 26

\*\* Please note that due to the winter holidays, will delay data collection until January 2006.