



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 \$4,200 which is half of the Basic Service (\$8,400) 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:

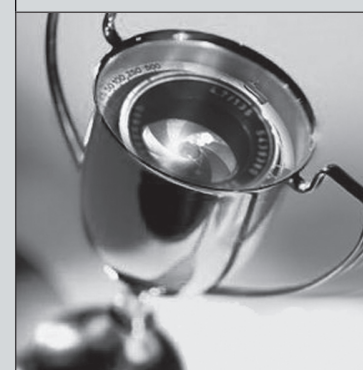
The National Citizen Survey™ • National Research Center • Attn: Heather Locke • 3005 30th St. • Boulder, CO 80301

Pricing

PRODUCT	PRICE	DESCRIPTION
Basic	\$8,400	Includes creation of survey instrument and materials, printing and mailing to 1,200 households, data analysis and the creation of a report of results, report of normative comparisons and summary report.
Spanish	\$1,450	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	\$6,200	Mailing is of 3,000 instead of 1,200.
Custom norms	\$1,100	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	\$1,350	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	\$1,750	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	\$850	Crosstabs of questions 1-15 by 4 demographic variables on survey to be provided under separate cover from report.
Geographic crosstabs	\$1,100	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	\$2,500	Presentation of results to Council or department heads. Cost includes travel expenses.

Voice of the People Awards: You May Already Be A Winner

This is no come on like those false promises for five star Caribbean cruises with the pitch to buy time share vacation property. In an important way, all jurisdictions that conduct citizen surveys merit awards for hearing their constituents. When local governments are too often notorious for pronouncing, ticketing, adjudicating, forbidding, facilitating, threatening, brokering or taxing, it is time to recognize those jurisdictions that listen. This year at the ICMA national conference in San Antonio, for the first time, National Research Center, Inc. (NRC) and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) will give two kinds of award to winning jurisdictions that conducted The National Citizen Survey™ in 2005. Both are called Voice of the People Awards.



Citizen Survey™: fire, police, EMS, street repair, garbage collection, library services, code enforcement, park services, recreation services and overall services. Not only must

a jurisdiction receive resident evaluations that are among the top three of surveying jurisdictions from 2005, it also must be in the top 10% of all jurisdictions in the national database of citizen surveys compiled and analyzed by NRC. For fire services, for example, that means the 2006 winners were both among the top three of the 2005 NCS surveying jurisdictions and in the top 20 or so with the highest ratings out of more than 200 jurisdictions that measured quality of fire services in the NRC database. Not every service has a winner. For the 2006 awards, no jurisdiction received evaluations that were in the top 10% of all jurisdictions in The NCS database for street repair. So there will be no Award for Excellence in street repair in 2006.

(continued on page 2)

Citizen Surveys on the Web: A Better Fly Trap or Just a Tangle of Sticky Problems?

Well, if local governments are doing more and more business via the Web and the world is going crazy for the Internet, then is there any reason to doubt the utility of the Web for conducting citizen surveys? For now, the answer is, "Yes, kind of."

NRC has been conducting its own research and following the research of others that compares Web surveying to surveying by phone or mail. In short, citizen surveys on the Web get lower response rates than mail

(continued on page 2)

Q: In The National Citizen Survey™ report of results, the data are often reported as ratings on the 100-point scale. What exactly are these ratings and why do you report the data this way rather than say, adding together the positive percentages?

A: The 100-point scale is not a percent. It is a conversion of responses to an average rating. Although responses to many of the evaluative questions on The National Citizen Survey™ are made on a 4-point scale with 4 representing the best rating and 1 the worst, many of the results are reported on a common scale where 0 is the worst possible rating and 100 is the best possible rating. If everyone reported "excellent," then the result would be 100 on the 100-point scale. Likewise, if all respondents gave a "poor" rating, the result would be 0 on the 100-point scale. If the average rating for quality of life was "good," then the result would be 67 on a 100-point scale; "fair" would be 33 on the 100-point scale.

Why do we do this? The 100-point scale is a fairer presentation of the data because it factors in all response categories rather than just the top two. For example, some survey firms add the positive points on the scale to show the percent of residents who agreed with a positive statement or who considered services to be excellent or good. But this metric cannot distinguish, for example, 5% Excellent and 40% Good from 40% Excellent and 5% Good. The average, will demonstrate that the second rating, all other responses being equal, is better than the first. Besides being fairer, the average is a more robust statistical summary of findings and permits ratings to be compared among different kinds of scale, after statistically controlling for the impacts of various question characteristics.

The Transformation Awards go to the jurisdictions that showed the greatest improvement in citizen ratings in 2005. These awards are for the same ten common services mentioned for the Excellence Awards. Because improvements must be large enough to be considered more than just a chance occurrence (that is the change in resident ratings must be statistically significant), not all service areas saw a winner here, either. Awards will be given in park services, street repair, fire, police, garbage collection, recreation services and overall services.

Those who participate in The NCS™ are automatically entered into the awards competition for the year of their participation. And what's so good about this competition? Well, we think it important to recognize the successes in garnering strong citizen evaluations of service delivery, because local governments try hard to offer high quality services and the touchstone of government success is independent, objective assessment of residents' opinions about how good those services are. Beyond the tough task of doing well

in comparison to other jurisdictions, proving that a jurisdiction can learn from prior ratings and improve its service in the view of the people it intends to serve is probably the strongest testament to that extraordinary and admired government trait – active listening.

Stay tuned, or better yet, come help us celebrate the winners at the ICMA conference in San Antonio, Sunday September 10 at 11am in Marriott Rivercenter 206B. Next time or maybe even this time, it could be you.

Citizens Surveys on the Web... Continued from Page 1

but about the same as phone. When properly done, Web results tend to be similar to mail surveys, though non-random sampling for Web surveys can yield more negative results. Web surveys attract a higher percentage of younger residents and males than respond to mail and phone surveys.

A valid Web sample involves selecting households randomly, which cannot be done simply by posting a survey on the Web and permitting anyone to respond. More acceptable sampling is accomplished by snail-mailing invitations showing a Web address (URL) to which the selected citizen is directed to visit and complete the survey.

If you are not looking for a representative sample but just offering residents an opportunity to participate, posting the survey for anyone to complete can work. Just keep in mind that generalizations about the community should not be made from this type of survey.

If your jurisdiction is interested in surveying the broad community, members of a group, students in school or recent customers of your jurisdiction's service on the Internet, be sure to consider all the issues so that you don't get caught in this Web and feel free to contact National Research Center professionals for assistance (Heather Locke 303-444-7863).



Calendar of New Classes October 2006-March 2007



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!

October 2006
Start: October 2
Data collection: Nov. 13-Dec. 18
Draft reports: January 8, 2007
Completion of The NCS: Jan. 29, 2007

November 2006
Start: November 5
Data collection: Jan. 2-Feb. 6, 2007
Draft reports: February 26
Completion of The NCS: March 19**

December 2006
Start: December 4
Data collection: Jan. 16-Feb. 20
Draft reports: March 13
Completion of The NCS: March 27

January 2007
Start: January 2
Data collection: Feb. 12-March 19
Draft reports: April 9
Completion of The NCS: April 30

February 2007
Start: January 29
Data collection: March 12-April 16
Draft reports: May 7
Completion of The NCS: May 29

March 2007
Start: February 26
Data collection: April 9-May 14
Draft reports: June 4
Completion of The NCS: June 25

** Please note that due to the winter holidays, we will delay data collection until January 2007.

Who Are We?

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.

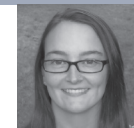
National Research Center, Inc. (NRC) is one of the leading survey research firms in the United States, focusing on the information needs of the public sector.

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.

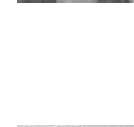
The International City/County Management Association (ICMA) is the professional and educational organization representing appointed managers and administrators in local governments throughout the world.

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.



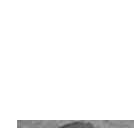
Heather Locke, M.A., is The National Citizen Survey™ Director. Heather earned a master's degree in Religious Studies from the University of Colorado at Boulder, with an emphasis in Eastern religious traditions, and undergraduate degrees in Religion and French. Her experience is in research, management, 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.



Damema Zoss, B.A., The National Citizen Survey™ Associate Director, earned her bachelor's degree in Political Science from the University of Vermont. Her experience and skills include marketing, management and customer service. Damema is involved in all aspects of The NCS™ from customizing surveys to data analysis and report creation. She also maintains the normative database for NRC.



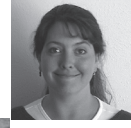
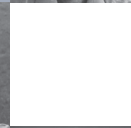
Erin Caldwell, MSPH, is a senior research associate at NRC. Erin has earned a master's degree in public health with an emphasis in research methods and statistics. Erin has over 10 years experience as a senior researcher and research manager. She has designed and conducted scores of citizen surveys,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



Shannon Hayden, M.A., senior research associate, 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™.



Lee Tyson, B.A., analyst, has a bachelor's degree in Anthropology and English from the University of Connecticut. Companies such as IBM and Bose have utilized her extensive technical skills, where she has provided customer troubleshooting support, Internet/Intranet design, and database expertise.



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 ICMA Executive Director, Bob O'Neill and the President of NRC, Thomas I Miller, Ph.D.