

THE COLUMN

News from
the Virginia Institute
of Government

Spring 2004

“The survey [conducted by the Center for Survey Research] has become an important component of Prince William County’s system for results-oriented government.”

JIM WEBSTER
INTERNAL AUDIT DIRECTOR
PWC’S OFFICE OF
EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT

Using Surveys to Involve Citizens

A good survey can effectively capture the views of local residents.

KATE F. WOOD

A survey of local citizens may be just the right tool for staying in touch with the attitudes and needs of your constituents and effectively setting strategic priorities.

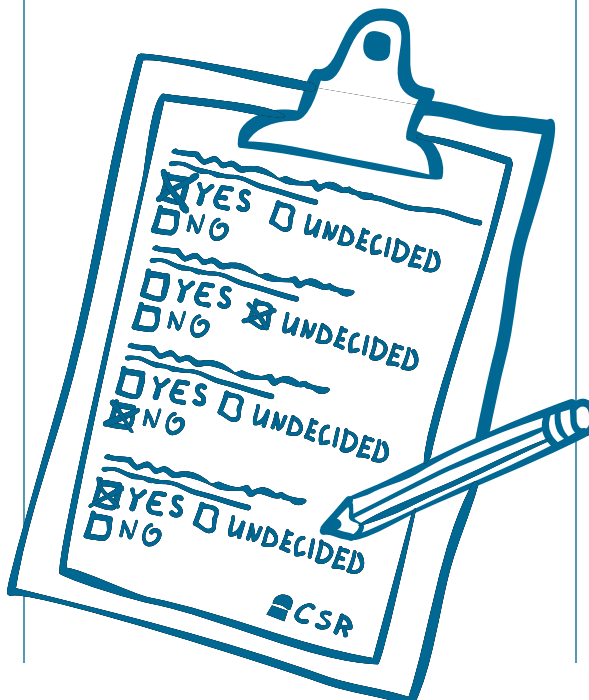
The University of Virginia’s Center for Survey Research, a unit of the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, is an interdisciplinary research and service organization that designs and conducts scientific surveys and analyzes the results on behalf of local governments, as well as a diverse set of other clients. CSR offers quality survey techniques, academic credentials, and practical understanding of the issues that confront local governments seeking to learn about their citizens.

BENEFITS TO LOCALITIES

In the past several years, CSR has worked with a number of Virginia localities to complete citizen surveys. Perhaps the best known is the **Prince William County** Citizen Satisfaction Survey, now in its 12th year, an annual survey of approximately 1,200 citizens of Prince William County. The County uses the information gleaned from its survey for strategic planning, program accountability, resource allocation, and program improvements. According to Jim Webster, internal audit director in PWC’s Office of Executive Management, “The survey has become an important component of the Prince William County system for results-oriented government.”

Other localities working with CSR in the past few years include **Bedford** and **Albemarle** counties and the city of **Charlottesville**. Albemarle is planning a survey for 2004, its third survey with the Center for Survey Research. “Albemarle County finds citizen surveys to be most valuable,” says County Executive Bob Tucker. “Our 2002 citizen survey gave us insights into how satisfied our citizens are with our services as well as what citizens’ top priorities are. The results were a critical component of our board’s strategic planning efforts.”

Jim Tolbert, director of Neighborhood Development Services for Charlottesville also realizes the value of his community’s survey of citizens for the planning process. Completed in 2000 in connection with a citywide series of over 150 community meetings, the survey provided data that Tolbert says was “instrumental in the development of our award-winning plan.” Likewise, labor-force surveys in the northern **Shenandoah valley** and the **Rappahannock-Rapidan region** in 2003 provided information crucial to areawide economic development planning.



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Using Surveys to Involve Citizens

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LOWER-COST OPTION

The surveys CSR designs with local governments are customized to capture each locality's unique characteristics and emergent issues. Dr. Thomas M. Guterbock, founding director, suggests that surveys by telephone are the best tool for gaining feedback from the populace.

While a fully customized telephone survey may be beyond the financial reach of small localities, valuable information may be obtained using other research modes. One example is the National Citizen Survey, a paper-and-pencil survey with a relatively low price tag. It is offered as a joint project of the International City/County Management Association and the National Research Center, which are planning to provide the National Citizen Survey to localities in Virginia. CSR will provide local consulting assistance as requested by jurisdictions wishing to participate. This cooperative effort has the potential to bring to Virginia localities the benefits of both a recognized national survey and the academic expertise and long-term local government experience available through the University of Virginia's Center for Survey Research.

CSR STAFF

CSR employs a full-time staff of six, including trained and experienced researchers, as well as administrative and field staff. They are assisted by graduate student research assistants and a fully trained corps of telephone interviewers. In addition to directing CSR, Dr. Guterbock holds faculty appointments in Sociology and Health Evaluation Sciences at the University of Virginia. He is a nationally known survey methodologist and researcher on community planning issues and citizen satisfaction. Assistant Director Robin Bebel joined CSR in 2003, after sixteen years of experience in survey research at Northern Illinois University's Public Opinion Laboratory, where she worked with dozens of local governing bodies.

DATA-COLLECTION METHODS

CSR's expertise includes all aspects of survey design, sampling, question wording,

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Succession Management

Helping your locality survive the upcoming exodus.

BY SUSIE WITTER, SPHR

This is the fifth and final article in a series on implementing succession management.

Previous articles in *The Column* outlined five steps necessary to implement succession management in your organization:

- Step 1 — determine the extent and time-frame of your organization's pending loss of expertise.
- Step 2 — define the competencies necessary to successfully fill the critical position(s) where the deficits will exist.
- Step 3 — identify employees who can be trained to meet the Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSAs) of the anticipated vacancies.
- Step 4 — assess the strengths and deficiencies of the individuals you have identified to fill the vacancies.
- Step 5 — establish professional development programs.

The final step (#6) is twofold — to continually monitor the program and ensure top management's on-going support. As with any initiative, if management is not involved, the likelihood of success diminishes. In addition to lending support, top management should actively participate through such activities as mentoring, providing on-the-job training, and fostering learning.

Succession management is not an overnight exercise. A successful program requires constant attention and an enormous amount of assessment and planning, including 1) in-depth, objective analysis of your organization, which can be done internally or with outside assistance (human resources professionals should initiate and manage assessment tasks); 2) organizational strategic planning that identifies your critical future needs; 3) identification and presentation of effective development tools and programs.

Several Web sites provide assistance in identifying required KSAs and information on employee training and development. The U.S. Department of Labor Education and Training Administration offers two helpful

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“Having the Virginia Institute of Government take the initiative to establish a statewide pay and classification information-sharing system would be a tremendous service for every public entity in the state. As we all know, performing pay and classification surveys is extremely time consuming, but is a necessity in order for localities, such as Front Royal, to remain competitive in the employment market. Knowing generally what other jurisdictions are paying for similar classifications would certainly make life in the trenches easier. I’m looking forward to working with the Institute.”

STAIGE F. MILLER, JR.
DIRECTOR OF MANAGEMENT SERVICES
TOWN OF FRONT ROYAL

Are Your Salaries Competitive?

Web-based pay and classification information system being studied.

What do localities like yours pay their police chiefs? Their attorneys? Their planners?

In order to have a competitive pay scale, you, as the manager, have to know what other jurisdictions in your local and regional market pay their employees. How much time do you or your staff spend gathering representative examples through phone calls and emails? Wouldn't it be easier if there were one source that offered reliable, current pay and classification information?

The Institute anticipates helping with a statewide Web-based, local-government pay and classification information-sharing system. With the assistance of focus groups, the Institute will determine whether to expand a small system currently serving the needs of a few Virginia localities or to introduce one of the private-sector products



being used in other areas of the country.

Since the inception of EBIS, the Institute's Electronic Broadcast Information Service, a significant number of inquiries have involved the gamut of local-government job

descriptions and pay ranges. The continued interest in this topic has highlighted the need for more than just a piece-meal process to sharing the information.

Look for a call from the Institute asking for your help in determining the best approach. The Institute plans to make a recommendation during 2004.



Contact Tedd Povar at 804-371-0202 or tep3e@virginia.edu. ▼

2004 EBIS AWARDS

The Institute has recognized the following localities and individual for providing consistent, substantive responses to inquiries on our Electronic Broadcast Information System. These awards reflect active participation over a period of years by localities that have not been previously recognized.

This year, we acknowledge some of the moderate and smaller sized localities that have been valuable EBIS contributors.



SPECIAL MERIT AWARD • COMMUNITY

Town of Front Royal



SPECIAL MERIT AWARD • INDIVIDUAL

Clay McCoy
Town of Christiansburg



TOP TEN AWARDS

City of Suffolk
Albemarle County
Alleghany County
Buckingham County
Campbell County
Fauquier County
Wise County
York County
Town of Orange
Town of Pearisburg



If your locality has email but is not receiving EBIS broadcasts, please contact us. The more localities on the list, the stronger our information gathering/sharing capacity. EBIS allows member localities to post questions on any local-government issue. In most cases, you'll begin receiving responses within minutes. EBIS is a *managed* system, avoiding repetition and ensuring pertinent responses.



Contact Tedd Povar at 804-371-0202 or tep3e@virginia.edu. ▼

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SEMINARS**



**BEHAVIORAL-BASED
INTERVIEWING:**

Techniques to Help You
Hire The Best



**SUCCEEDING AS A
FIRST-TIME SUPERVISOR:**

Guidelines for Employees
Newly Promoted
to Supervisory Positions



**CUSTOMER SERVICE IN
THE PUBLIC SECTOR:**

the Art & Science
of Putting Citizens First



If you are interested in bring-
ing any of these seminars
to your locality, please contact
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Using Surveys to Involve Citizens

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field operations, analysis, and quality control. Since its inception in 1988, CSR has conducted thousands of telephone, mail, and in-person interviews, reported results, and archived data for future use. CSR's state-of-the-art telephone CATI (Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing) facility in Charlottesville includes 22 interviewing stations and an audio-monitoring system. CSR has conducted scores of mail-out studies and has recently added the capacity to run Web-based, self-administered survey projects.



*The author was CSR's associate director
from 2000 to 2003.*

*Contact Robin Bebel at 434-243-5224 or
rab6r@virginia.edu. Visit www.virginia.edu/surveys/* ▼

Succession Management

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sites: www.doleta.gov and www.bls.gov/oco
(Occupational Outlook Handbook).

Succession management, although a relatively new concept to Virginia local governments, can be crucial to maintaining your organization's well being in the coming years. Even if you go no further than identifying expected loss of experienced employees, you will have performed a valuable service for your locality.



The writer is a human resource management consultant in Richmond, Virginia.

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