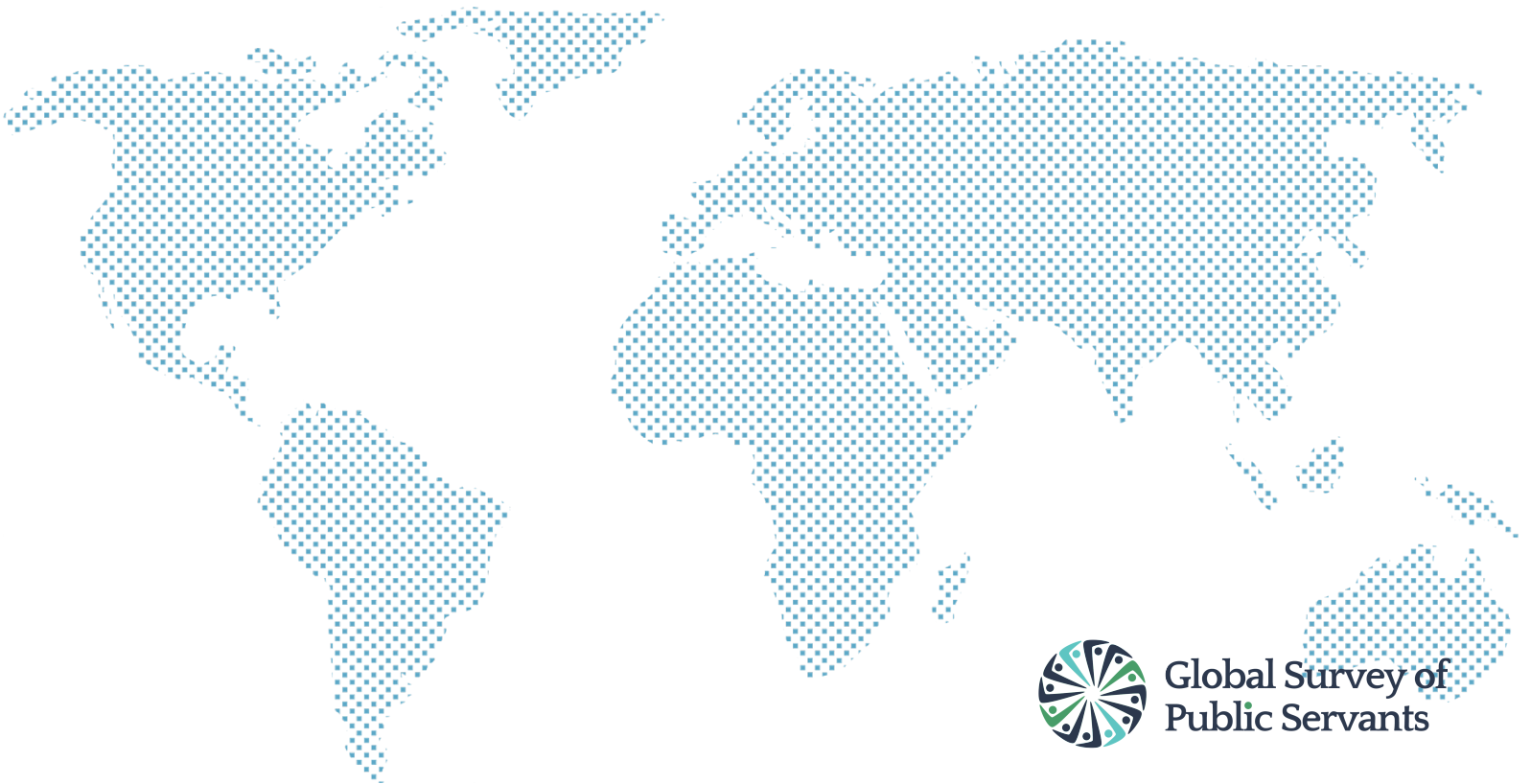


THE GLOBAL SURVEY OF PUBLIC SERVANTS

Marketing Surveys of Public Servants



**Global Survey of
Public Servants**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Global Survey of Public Servants (GSPS) is an initiative to generate survey data from public servants in government institutions around the world. **The aim of the initiative is to increase the volume, quality and coherence of survey data on public administration.**

Understanding the motivations, behaviors and organizational environments of public servants through surveys is central to (1) better understand how public services and states around the world work; and, (2) help governments manage public services better. Further details, such as our approach, conceptual framework and instruments are available at www.globalsurveyofpublicservants.org.

The purpose of this note is to provide government counterparts with guidelines for creating communication themes and marketing ideas to maximize participation in government-led surveys of public officials. This note is an adapted version of the US Office of Personnel Management's Communications Guide for the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey and was created through a collection of multiple best practices on survey communication across agencies.

For further information, please contact the GSPS team at info@globalsurveyofpublicservants.org.

1. Overview

Communication plays a very important role in the success of any survey of government staff led or supported by the government. This marketing guide is intended to present ideas for designing communication materials for surveys of public officials and are aimed at government agencies implementing or supporting the implementation of a survey of public officials. This guide is based on the US Office of Personnel Management's Communications Guide for the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey and was created through a collection of multiple best practices on communication across agencies and countries in which the Global Survey of Public Servants/World Bank Bureaucracy Lab have worked in.

The following document should be used as a guide for creating communication themes and marketing ideas to maximize participation in government-led surveys of public officials. The focus is maximizing response rates. Though we touch on communicating results, alternative resources are available from the Global Survey of Public Servants that focus solely on the communication of results arising from surveys of public servants given the importance of that activity.

Effective and continuous communication with employees is critical in ensuring a successful survey effort for any organization implementing a survey. Examples of key efforts include:

- Ⓢ **Before the survey:** Tell employees about the timing of the survey and the value of their feedback. If employees believe their feedback will result in constructive change, they will be more likely to respond.
- Ⓢ **During the survey:** Send out reminders and hold activities to increase participation. Make the survey salient and engaging.
- Ⓢ **After the survey:** Discuss and share agency results and actions. Employees frequently cite their appreciation of past responses as a motivation to fill in future surveys.



**Communication is key: you
cannot *over*-communicate!
(Well, it's hard to get to that point.)**

2. Creating an Organization-level Communications Plan

The experience of many public services is that organization-level communications are critical to a survey's success. **Employees want to hear from their organization that survey responses are going to have impact**, and that senior managers want to hear what they have to say. They want to feel that the effort is credible and worth their time. All this is the job of communications.

This process starts early. Organizations ideally begin advertising and marketing the survey several weeks prior to survey implementation. Communication must also continue throughout and after the

survey implementation period. E-mail reminders and short adverts to send through WhatsApp/social media for online surveys. Calendar invites with reminders for face-to-face surveys, or even for online surveys where you ask for a specific time on an officer’s calendar to fill in the survey. An effective communication strategy uses multiple modes of transmitting ideas and information to reach the greatest number of people.

There are multiple points in the survey administration cycle at which communicating with your public employees (i.e. target respondents) is particularly critical for an effective survey process. These essential points are outlined in the diagram below (Figure 1) and more detail is provided in Table 1.

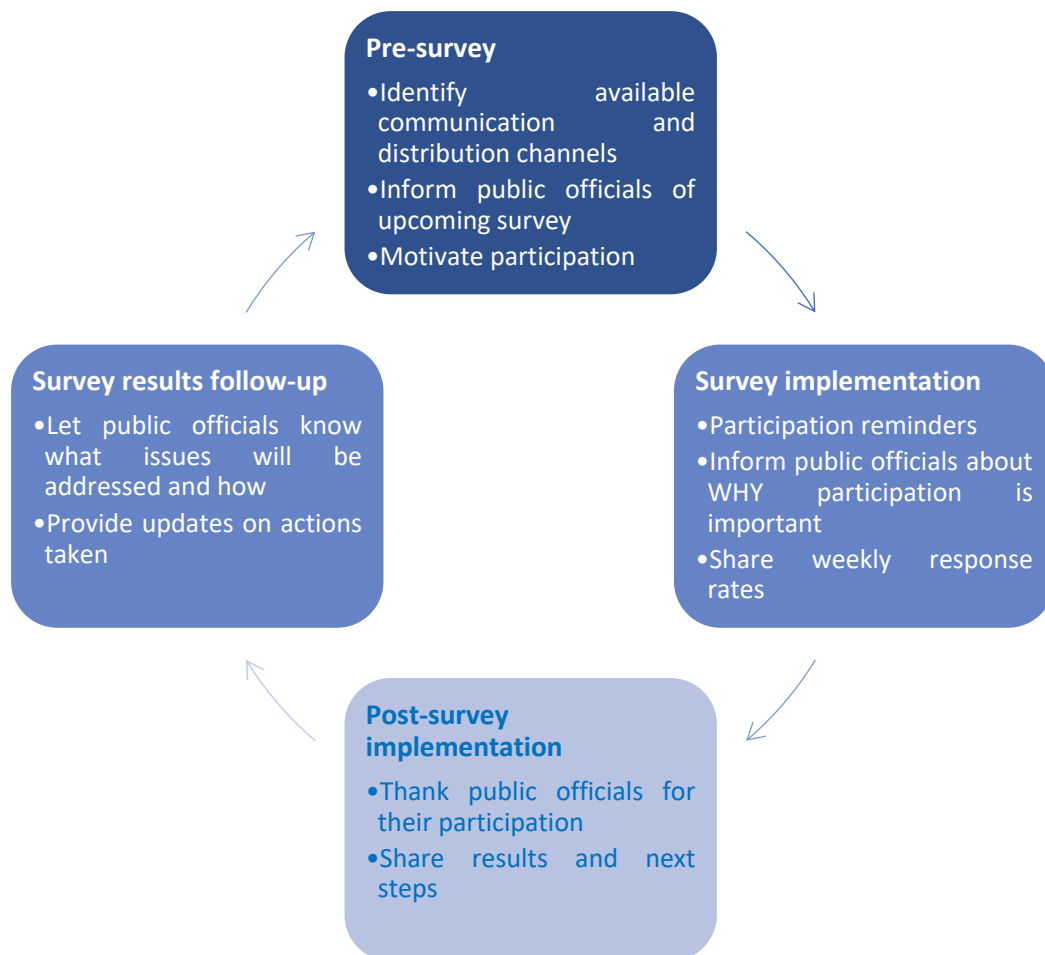


Figure 1: Stages of Survey Communication

It is critical that communication about the survey starts early and occurs often. Outlined below are four primary periods of communication related to most survey efforts. This table can be used as a guide for planning your organization’s communication strategies.

Stage	Pre-survey: CREATING AWARENESS	Survey implementation: PARTICIPATION	Post survey implementation: THANK YOU	Survey results: FOLLOW UP
Timeline	<i>Pre-survey kick-off</i>	<i>During the survey</i>	<i>After survey closure</i>	<i>Continuous</i>
Opportunity	<p>Create awareness!</p> <p>Employees must know the survey is coming.</p>	<p>Provide motivation!</p> <p>For some employees, the opportunity to provide their input is welcome. For others, increased participation occurs with additional motivation.</p>	<p>Thank employees!</p> <p>Employees are taking time out of their workday to offer feedback. It is important to know that their responses will be used.</p>	<p>Be transparent!</p> <p>Tell employees about actions taken in response to their feedback. Transparency also builds trust.</p>
Communication and key messages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Survey dates. □ Who may get the survey. □ Email address sending the survey. □ Advise employees to watch their email or messages for the survey invitation. □ Explain why survey participation matters. □ Update employees on previous survey-related activities, actions, and results. □ Inform employees of organization-specific goals related to the survey. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Remind employees of when the survey will close. □ Send weekly updates on response rate to all staff. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Generate friendly competition by organization/department/unit participation rates. □ Reiterate why survey participation matters. □ Update employees on survey-related activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Thank staff for responding to the survey. □ Inform staff when results are available. □ Share how survey results are used. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Pledge to communicate to employees when results arrive. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Share organization and component-level data. □ Share plans about actions to improve in response to survey results. □ Notify employees about the outcomes of any actions taken.
Communication examples	Announcements in the organization's Intranet site, email, newsletter, staff meetings. Posters in common areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Memo from management encouraging staff. □ Progress tracker in offices (e.g. on boards). □ Use the survey branding in emails and messages. 	Send a thank you email to staff for their participation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Post survey results on website. □ Share results with all employees through email, messages, and in staff meetings.
Key voices	Senior leadership and middle management.			
Key tools	Email, messaging, team meetings, intranet, posters.			
Measurement		Weekly participation numbers.		Survey results.

Table 1: Survey campaign communication stages

3. Connecting Communications to a Communications Plan

Often, public service surveys are driven by messaging from the most senior member of the public service. Many services are simply too large for this message to feel credible when it is announced at the national or service-wide level. To increase response rates, managers and colleagues across the organization should encourage staff to participate.

Focus on communication from those **leaders with the most employee contact**: mid-level managers and supervisors. A common mistake to make is enlisting only the most senior leader (for instance, the Secretary, Chief, etc.) to send out messages to the organization in support of a new program or initiative. While these leaders do play a key role in organization communication, their **level of direct relevance to front line employees** is often limited.

Building **multi-level communications** leverages your senior leaders' voice but also includes mid-level managers and supervisors. These individuals have a stronger relationship and more **personal connection to a larger number of employees**. They are also usually more connected to the day-to-day activities in an organization and are in a better position to make changes that employees will experience.

Ways to do this:

[Develop a multi-tiered communications approach](#)

- ⊙ Matrix your messaging to help disseminate your message across multiple communication channels
- ⊙ Keep all messaging on a consistent theme
 - Develop a message map that includes specific messages for the various groups in your audience
- ⊙ Tone and focus of the messages are varied to the different levels or functions of the people you intend to reach
 - For example, send a message to your supervisors on how to talk about a subject, while simultaneously sending a message to all staff about the topic that supervisors can build upon.

[Include the best voices in the conversation](#)

- ⊙ Look for non-traditional audiences and influencers – they may not be the heads of their organizations
 - For example, using special interest groups, peer and functional advisory groups, or training cohorts to communicate to employees about the importance of participating in the survey
- ⊙ Hearing the message from multiple sources is an important and effective communication strategy

[You cannot over-communicate](#)

- ⊙ Just when you think people are tired of the message you are trying to convey, it's just really starting to sink in.
- ⊙ Substantial effort is needed to saturate an audience with the message you want them to hear. Use multiple communication channels to reach your employees about the survey such as:
 - Email
 - WhatsApp and SMS messages
 - Building signage or posters
 - Intranet or organization website
 - Social media

Create engaging content

Ways to do this:

Use plain language

- ⊙ More people will understand your message if jargon and specialized language or acronyms are avoided.

Plan first, write second

- ⊙ Create content only after deciding where and how you want to distribute your message Make sure your content is channel-appropriate.
 - Your message will be lost if it is too long or too complex for its delivery method

Move beyond email

- ⊙ Use a variety of communications tools to add impact. The average office worker is estimated to receive dozens of emails a day!
 - Posters, SMS and WhatsApp messages, and team meetings are just a few ways to make your message more memorable.

Command attention

- ⊙ Package data and information with visuals that capture attention
- ⊙ Think critically about what you want to communicate to arrive at more creative solutions

Think from the outside-in

- ⊙ What is going on in your industry beyond your agency that sparks employees' interest?
 - Relating internal content to external topics can help connect employees to their jobs, their organization's mission, and larger communities.



Figure 2: Screenshot from Chile's 2019 'Your Opinion Counts' Campaign

For Those Who Need It, Provide More Information

Many survey takers simply get on with taking the survey after they feel an impulse to engage with it. Others look for more information about the objectives and details of the survey. Provide this information to them in an easily accessible way.

Survey FAQs

Make sure you know and can provide answers to questions about the objectives, nature, and specifics of the survey. And do this up front, with a set of frequently asked questions (FAQs). It's important that employees feel that their participation is valuable and will contribute to concrete action, that the government will respond by taking action and providing updates, and that they can participate knowing that their responses will remain confidential at all times.

Example questions:

[What is the purpose of this survey?](#)

[How long does it take to complete the survey?](#)

[How do I know that my responses will remain confidential?](#)

[May I pass/forward the survey on to someone else to take?](#)

[Who do I contact if I have any technical issues?](#)

[What will happen with the results of the survey What will they be used for?](#)

The Most Critical Communication is of the Results

Many of the most successful surveys in the public service underline the importance of building a long-term reputation for communication: communicating the results speedily and at the most granular level possible; communicating a plan for action and then following up with progress reports and with evidence of progress. This underlies future response rates and communication efficacy. How the survey is communicated one year impacts how it is perceived in the next, and this includes the results and actions taken on them.



**The most critical communication
is of the results**

Present results specific to managers in a simple dashboard or excel table that they can see as a product made specifically for them. Where feasible, present anonymized data publicly so that officials from across the service can benchmark their organization’s strengths and weaknesses. Where managers can pose challenges for themselves and for the organization to try and achieve improvements before the next survey, this generates a solid link to the usefulness of the survey exercise.

Further resources regarding the communication of survey results are available at www.globalsurveyofpublicservants.org.

Notes from the Field

To provide some experience from the field, we have reached out to a number of the most experienced offices in the world running surveys of public officials for their advice on communicating public service surveys.

Australian Public Service Commission

The Australian Public Service Commission report, “There are certainly differences in the response rates from agency to agency, and within agency clusters of similar size or function. Agency response rates in 2019 ranged from 14 to 100 per cent, with a median of 77 per cent. From our consultation with agencies, it is evident that agencies who tend to have the highest response rates also have a variety of strategies in place. These agencies tend to have a high level of interest and buy-in on the importance of participating from their senior managers. They also have a reputation for taking action with the results. They will advise staff of the actions arising, how they intend to respond and the initiatives they are putting in place. Each agency will differ in its approach, depending on its results and where these suggest it needs to focus.

During the survey administration period, some agencies innovatively promote the survey to encourage participation by their staff. Some agencies will post on their intranet a leader board of completion rates for the agency’s organizational units or teams. This fosters a sense of competition. We are aware that some agencies even develop an APS employee census mascot, which is used throughout the survey period to promote the survey and participation in it. Where technology allows, some agencies will also employ information boards/screens, intranet, and communication channels to promote the survey.”

National School of Public Administration of Brazil (ENAP)

ENAP, the National School of Public Administration is a think tank that works under the Brazilian Ministry of Economy. ENAP has as its students civil servants, mainly from the federal government. Recently, ENAP began to rethink its survey marketing strategy and is now making extensive use of social networks for communications purposes. For example, in a 2020 Civil Service COVID-19 survey, ENAP ran a communications campaign via social networks (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn) and via email messages sent to a database of high executives of the Brazilian central government. ENAP also

uses communication channels in a network of groups, associations, and other agencies from the federal government to publicize surveys. Finally, ENAP publicizes its surveys via its [website](#) and through traditional media including TV networks and [newspapers](#).

United States Federal Viewpoint Survey Team

This document was based on a generic document produced by the Federal Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) team. However, throughout the Federal Government, individuals are pushing colleagues within their specific agencies to respond to FEVS. Each agency has a person responsible for motivating employees to respond to FEVS, and many revert to social media and video adverts (see screenshots below) to highlight the survey. Search youtube for FEVS to find current examples of marketing videos (they are often put publicly online).

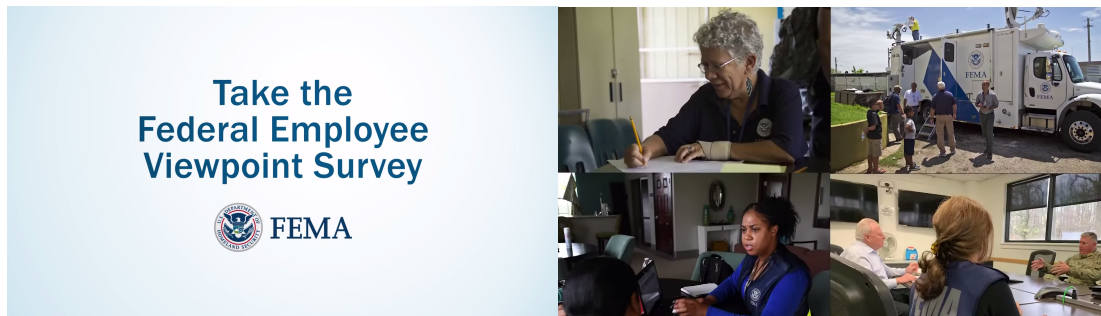


Figure 3: Screenshots from the Federal Emergency Management Agency FEVS campaigns



Figure 4: Screenshots from the National Institutes of Health FEVS campaigns

Some FEVS coordinators bring together managers from across the organization to motivate them to encourage staff to fill in the survey (see Figure 5). At whatever level of marketing complexity, simply having a colleague from your organization talk to you about the importance of FEVS is reported by teams across the US Government as a key way of increasing response rates. Thus, the lesson from FEVS is that a coordinator at each agency that bridges the central FEVS marketing efforts and makes them organization-specific is one of the most effective ways of increasing responsiveness.



Figure 5: The National Institutes of Health FEVS coordinator brings together relevant managers to motivate them to encourage their employees to fill in FEVS

Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey

May 7 - June 18

I want to hear from you!
Take the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey Today!

For your link to the survey, check your email for a message from the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey-HE, evhe@opm.gov, with the subject line - "The Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey: Empowering Employees. Inspiring Change."

For more information, please visit:
<https://hr.nih.gov/fevs>

NIH National Institutes of Health

Figure 6: The National Institutes of Health FEVS coordinator creates a message that has all relevant information about responding to FEVS

Building on this, the most successful US agency coordinators text/WhatsApp/message an advert for FEVS with all the salient information (see Figure 6). Making personal connections at scale, such as through personal messaging, is a powerful way to encourage members of the public service to respond to personnel surveys.

Ghanaian Office of the Head of the Civil Service

Ghana's Office of the Head of the Civil Service runs ad hoc surveys of public servants, such as to assess the experience of new recruits, those going through the promotion process, or candidates applying to the public service. They emphasize the importance of personal interactions with potential respondents to increase response rates. For the study of candidates to the public service, they had interns talk to each potential respondent about the usefulness of the survey. For the study of new recruits, they had managers talk directly to the officials through a videoconference about the importance of the survey to their work.