

Customer Satisfaction Survey of Indian Tribal Governments



Office of Indian Tribal Governments
Tax Exempt Government Entities Division

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2004 ITG Customer Satisfaction Survey

Balanced Measures and the Office of Indian Tribal Governments

The Office of Indian Tribal Governments (ITG) is located within the Tax Exempt/ Government Entities (TE/GE) Business Unit. ITG's customers are 564 federally recognized tribes. ITG seeks to provide all of the services that tribes need in order to fully administer federal tax laws and to provide tribes with information they require to further their economic development without risk of federal tax concerns.

As part of the IRS, the Office of Indian Tribal Governments (ITG) is required to utilize balanced measures for employee satisfaction, business results, and customer satisfaction. The use of measures across these three areas allows the organization to better assess the effectiveness of its programs.

The balanced measure "Customer Satisfaction" is one of the "five levers of change" identified by former Commissioner Rossotti to modernize the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Each of the Balanced Measures is supported by three strategic goals: Service to Each Taxpayer; Service to All Taxpayers; and Productivity through a Quality Work Environment. This research will allow us to determine the level of customer satisfaction espoused by our customers. It will also allow us to evaluate our programs to see where we need to improve our performance.

Purpose

ITG conducted the 2004 Customer Satisfaction Survey to obtain feedback from our customers that will allow us to measure customer satisfaction with our products and services. This research is an important part of measuring our performance within the context of the aforesaid "Customer Satisfaction" balanced measure. This report summarizes the findings ITG obtained from the survey. The information collected from this survey is important for several reasons.

One, it will enable ITG to identify program areas where we are meeting our customers' expectations as well as those areas where improvement is needed. The survey feedback will allow ITG to reallocate/assign resources within our annual Work Plan to produce and/or improve those products/ services that are important to our customers.

Two, it will allow us to contrast the level of customer satisfaction espoused by our customers with the results from an identical survey conducted in 2003. This annual assessment will create opportunities for us to identify areas where our initiatives are working or have failed, and will allow ITG to modify and/or design new programs and initiatives to better address our customers' needs.

Background

Our research began in April 2001, when a group of our employees met in a brainstorming session to develop a list of products and services that we thought were important to the tribal governments. We broke the list down to find the positive aspects and negative attributes of each product/service and created measures. The measures were then ranked in terms of the perceived importance to the tribes. Next, we met with representatives of the Five Civilized Tribes for a focus group to determine their needs and concerns.¹ After studying the results of the focus group we changed the ranking of our measures, as our perception of the tribes' needs was slightly different from their perception.

As part of this effort, we prioritized and selected the measures best suited to fit the needs of our customers. The aforementioned measures were then used to develop a customer satisfaction questionnaire. A copy of the questionnaire is included in the Appendix. Next, we wrote an implementation plan for the survey that included the questionnaire. A copy of the implementation plan can be obtained by calling the ITG manager for Outreach, Planning & Review. The implementation plan was subsequently approved by the Office of Management and Budget. Finally, we successfully conducted a mail survey this past summer with our customers.

Response Rate

The questionnaire was mailed out to 564 federally recognized tribes beginning on August 5, 2004. The survey officially ended on September 15th, but responses were tabulated through October 10th. The following actions were taken by ITG to boost our response rate:

- ITG management reminded the tribes about the survey, and encouraged their participation in the survey during the consultation meetings that were held prior to the survey effort.
- ITG Specialists asked tribes to participate during all contacts with tribes during the period of the survey
- ITG News issuances for July 2004 contained a national article on the pending survey, and were used to promote the survey and seek participation.
- The Director, ITG, personally signed a cover letter that accompanied each survey mailed to tribes in which she asked for their participation.
- A mailing was made to selected tribes as a reminder to complete the survey.
- Telephone and e-mail contacts were made with tribal designees to alert them to the mailing of the survey and to encourage them to respond.

ITG received 195 responses from the tribes during this period. This results in an initial response rate of 35%. From "The Survey Research Handbook," by Alreck and Settle, the researchers state, "Mail surveys with response rates over 30 percent are rare. Response

¹ The Five Civilized tribes are located in Oklahoma.

rates are often only about 5 or 10 percent."² Previous contact with the National American Indian Housing Council indicated they have 500-600 customers and mainly deal with the housing authority within federally recognized tribes. Our contact said they have conducted many surveys and they usually receive a response rate between 7-13%.

In addition, ITG called a company named Tribal Data Resources (TDR) to discuss their experiences in contacting tribes. TDR is a privately owned company that compiles data on tribes such as tribal membership, current political leaders, etc. TDR updates their database annually, and they must contact each tribe to accomplish this task. We spoke with the office manager, Mr. Bowman. Mr. Bowman stated that anyone who achieved a response rate of 25-30% was doing "really well." Based upon the aforesaid historical response rates, ITG is pleased with a response rate of 35%, which represents an improvement from the 24% level achieved in 2003 which was our first year of conducting this survey.³

Response Bias

There are a number of ways the results from a survey may contain some bias. One example might include the survey instrument itself, the questionnaire, which may be written in a manner that yields biased responses. ITG has made several efforts to try and eliminate the possibility that our survey results are biased. Some of these efforts were included in the design of the questionnaire and/or the implementation of the survey (e.g., allowing the respondents to the survey to maintain their anonymity). ITG cannot say definitively that these and other actions have precluded any response bias. Rather, ITG can say that concrete steps were taken to try and minimize the potential for response bias.

Yet another type of bias is called *non-response bias*. This situation may occur when the opinions, values, etc. expressed by the respondents are quite different from those held by the customers who did not reply. If the non-response bias is severe enough, it can render the results of the survey invalid. In other words, the results reported from the survey do not accurately reflect the opinions, values, etc. the survey researcher intended to measure for the survey group. In this survey, we are cognizant of the possibility that the opinions of the tribes that did respond to our survey may be more favorable than the opinions of tribes that did not respond. Given that 2/3rds of our customers did not respond, the reader is advised the opinions reflected in our responses may be slightly more favorable than those opinions held by tribes that did not respond. ITG has made an effort to discern if our respondents are generally representative of the different market segments of tribes that we have previously defined in our market segmentation report. For example, we used geographic location of the tribe to generate the results shown in Table 1. From Table 1, the reader can ascertain that ITG received 66 responses from tribes located in Alaska. This represents a 29% response rate for all federally recognized tribes that reside in Alaska.⁴ The remaining 129 responses come from tribes located in the continental United States.

² Page 35.

³ ITG recognizes the Office of Management and Budget standards are higher. ITG will continue to look for ways to improve our response rate.

⁴ 227 federally tribes reside in Alaska. Hence 49/227 equals 22%.

Table 1 Survey Responses by ITG Field Group

2004 ITG Customer Satisfaction Survey Results		
Group	Responses	Percent of Tribes Responding
7280	32	48.5%
7281	23	39.7%
7282	14	26.9%
7283	46	37.7%
7284(w/o Alaska)	14	34.1%
Alaska	<u>66</u>	<u>29.3%</u>
Total	195	34.6%

The 129 responses represent a 37% response rate for all federally recognized tribes located in the continental U.S.⁵ Based upon these results, we feel that two of our market segments (i.e., tribes located in Alaska without class III gaming and tribes located outside of Alaska with or without gaming) are fairly represented. This finding is important because the needs for assistance with federal tax administration vary considerably among tribes located in these two market segments.⁶

Findings From 2004 ITG Customer Satisfaction Survey

The Questionnaire Scale

The reader is reminded that a Likert Scale was used for most of the questions. On this scale, a “1” indicated the respondent strongly agreed with the statement. A response of “5” indicated the respondent strongly disagree with the statement. A response of 3 indicated the respondent was neutral on their agreement/disagreement with the proposed statement. For purposes of analysis, we have lumped together the “1s” with the “2s” and the “4s” with the “5s”.

The reader is also reminded that some of the proposed questions (statements) were written such that an answer of “5-strongly disagree” was a good response. We have reversed the results from these statements to ensure they are readily comparable to statements that were written in the affirmative to maintain a consistent presentation of our findings. This change is reflected in the Tables.

The “lumping” of scores together is an approach the IRS has used to evaluate scores received during the Employee Satisfaction Survey. We hope the consistent use of this approach will make it easier to understand the results from our customer satisfaction survey and enhance their usefulness.

⁵ 337 tribes reside in the continental United States. 129/337 equals 37%.

⁶ The slightly lower response rate for tribes located in Alaska, 29%, is not surprising given the relatively meager staff resources these tribes have.

Survey Results

The results from the survey are summarized in the following Tables 2 and 3. We created a measure equal to the difference between the percentage of “good” and “bad” scores. This measure is shown in the right columns of Tables 2 and 3, with results from the current survey contrasted to the results from the FY 2003 survey. The lower the difference the greater the perceived dissatisfaction expressed by our customers. The “difference” is a useful measure in that it allows one to quickly identify those areas where ITG has pronounced differences in customer satisfaction. Table 2 reflects the response rates in order of the questions (statements) asked on the questionnaire.

Table 2 2004 ITG Customer Satisfaction Survey Results-by question order

Question	Questionnaire Response Scores (percentages)			Difference (Good-Bad) FY 2004	Difference (Good-Bad) FY 2003
	Good	Neutral	Bad		
1	132	45	13	119	43
2	130	40	21	109	42
3	135	34	16	119	61
4	110	57	17	93	40
5	146	31	7	139	72
6	91	64	34	57	18
7	132	46	10	122	50
8	94	66	23	71	37
9	119	49	22	97	34
10	100	64	24	76	33
11	133	42	14	119	43
12	101	80	6	95	43
13	147	37	4	143	64
14	140	42	6	134	54
15	102	66	20	82	36
16	135	44	10	125	48
17	117	63	6	111	50
18	151	34	4	147	73
19	154	30	5	149	71
20	116	61	9	107	50
21	46	129	3	43	15
22	84	85	13	71	25
23	124	53	6	118	52
24	113	59	14	99	43
25	99	81	3	96	34
26	137	44	6	131	56

One can see that in Table 3 we have taken the questions in Table 2 and rearranged them by ascending order of those that have the smallest difference between the “good” (1/2) and “bad” (4/5) scores. The narrower the difference the greater the need to address the issue raised within the question (statement). For example the lowest figure calculated in the difference column in Table 3 was 43, which occurred with question (statement) 21. Question (statement) 21 reads, “The Office of ITG treats all Tribes equally.” This is one area where ITG might reexamine its products/services and the way they are delivered to see if any changes can be made that would improve the tribes’ satisfaction with our performance in this area.

Table 3 2004 ITG Customer Satisfaction Survey Results-by rank

Question	Questionnaire Response Scores (percentages)			Difference (Good-Bad) FY 2004	Difference (Good-Bad) FY 2003
	Good	Neutral	Bad		
21	46	129	3	43	15
6	91	64	34	57	18
8	94	66	23	71	37
22	84	85	13	71	25
10	100	64	24	76	33
15	102	66	20	82	36
4	110	57	17	93	40
12	101	80	6	95	43
25	99	81	3	96	34
9	119	49	22	97	34
24	113	59	14	99	43
20	116	61	9	107	50
2	130	40	21	109	42
17	117	63	6	111	50
23	124	53	6	118	52
1	132	45	13	119	43
3	135	34	16	119	61
11	133	42	14	119	43
7	132	46	10	122	50
16	135	44	10	125	48
26	137	44	6	131	56
14	140	42	6	134	54
5	146	31	7	139	72
13	147	37	4	143	64
18	151	34	4	147	73
19	154	30	5	149	71

In examining those areas that have relatively low scores, ITG should consider several factors in evaluating what type of follow-up action is warranted. These factors include:

- The degree of control ITG has on the aforesaid area (e.g., ITG has less control over the ease of understanding forms and publications)
- The amount of resources needed to make an improvement(s) in one area where ITG scored low vis-à-vis other areas with similar scores
- The perceived impact on the IRS mission from making an improvement(s) in a given area
- The impact external factors have on customer satisfaction within the given area (e.g., tribes may view certain legislation passed by the U.S. Congress as unfair and a sign ITG does not want to work with them even though ITG had little if any influence over the legislation)

Conversely, in Table 3 one can observe the widest difference was 149, which occurred with question (statement) 19. Question 19 reads, “The Tribe will contact the Office of ITG when it has a problem and/or question”. ITG scored relatively high in this area. It would be a good idea to share this information within the ITG organization to let the employees know where ITG is performing relatively well.

Table 4 2004 ITG Customer Satisfaction Survey Scores-by components of Customer Satisfaction

Area*	Questionnaire Response Scores (percentages) FY 2004			Questionnaire Response Scores (percentages) FY 2003		
	Good	Neutral	Bad	Good	Neutral	Bad
Recognition	65%	26%	9%	61%	30%	10%
Burden/Delivery of Information	60%	31%	9%	60%	20%	13%
Protocol/Horizontal Equity	70%	25%	5%	58%	36%	6%
Collaborate	63%	34%	3%	51%	35%	13%
Accuracy/Timeliness/Honesty	60%	35%	5%	48%	42%	10%
*See the ITG Balanced Measures Task Force Report for a detailed explanation of these areas.						

In Table 4, we have provided the survey findings broken out among the five components that make up our customer satisfaction measure. The areas of our customer satisfaction balanced measure where ITG scored the lowest include those falling under “Burden/Delivery of Information” and “Accuracy/ Timeliness/ Honesty”. Finally, in Table 5 we have provided the survey results broken out by ITG Field Group.⁷

⁷ See the ITG Balanced Measures Report for a complete description of the areas that make up our customer satisfaction measure.

From Table 5, one can see that tribes located in Alaska have the lowest level of satisfaction with products and services produced by ITG. Less than 56% of the tribes in Alaska rated their overall satisfaction with ITG's products and services as "good". However, a more significant finding is the 57% level of overall satisfaction from tribes in the Pacific Northwest, which is the only area where overall satisfaction decreased from FY 2003. This may be partially attributable to a poor response rate from that area, which is another issue for further study.

Table 5 ITG Customer Satisfaction Survey Scores- by ITG Field Group

	ITG Field Group											
	7280		7281		7282		7283		7284 (PNW)		7284 Alaska	
	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2003	FY 2004
Burden/ Delivery of Information												
Satisfied	70%	60%	66%	76%	65%	82%	61%	71%	63%	60%	49%	57%
Neutral	16%	30%	26%	18%	11%	11%	29%	22%	28%	29%	35%	32%
Dissatisfied	14%	10%	8%	6%	24%	7%	9%	7%	9%	11%	16%	12%
Collaborate												
Satisfied	71%	72%	65%	75%	60%	77%	58%	68%	32%	38%	38%	45%
Neutral	13%	22%	29%	19%	23%	21%	35%	26%	59%	54%	44%	41%
Dissatisfied	16%	6%	6%	7%	18%	2%	7%	6%	9%	9%	18%	14%
Recognition												
Satisfied	83%	75%	71%	80%	68%	84%	67%	76%	45%	55%	46%	58%
Neutral	9%	21%	21%	16%	20%	14%	27%	18%	43%	36%	41%	36%
Dissatisfied	8%	4%	8%	3%	13%	2%	6%	6%	11%	9%	13%	6%
Protocol/ Horizontal Equity												
Satisfied	73%	73%	65%	75%	64%	72%	57%	70%	60%	51%	48%	51%
Neutral	20%	25%	34%	25%	24%	22%	42%	29%	36%	46%	43%	43%
Dissatisfied	8%	2%	2%	0%	12%	6%	1%	1%	4%	3%	9%	5%
Accuracy/ Timeliness/ Honesty												
Satisfied	66%	63%	56%	68%	45%	72%	54%	66%	47%	46%	35%	45%
Neutral	25%	28%	37%	27%	40%	28%	37%	30%	41%	52%	51%	49%
Dissatisfied	9%	8%	6%	4%	14%	0%	8%	4%	11%	2%	14%	6%
Overall Satisfaction												
Satisfied	84%	77%	69%	87%	60%	92%	83%	88%	67%	57%	48%	56%
Neutral	11%	19%	23%	13%	10%	8%	14%	12%	17%	29%	41%	39%
Dissatisfied	5%	3%	8%	0%	30%	0%	3%	0%	17%	14%	11%	5%

Recommendations

ITG should take the following actions relevant to Customer Satisfaction:

- Post the results of the survey on the ITG web site
- Share the results with all ITG employees
- Review areas where ITG scored relatively low, revisit the corresponding program/ services relevant to those areas, and develop actions to implement methods to improve performance
- Review areas where ITG scored relatively high to see what program /services are working and if any best practices might be ascertained
- Contact the IRS Office of Survey Analysis to provide follow-up actions undertaken as a result of the survey findings
- Conduct follow-up with the tribes in the Pacific Northwest to ascertain causes of dissatisfaction
- Continue to revisit/redesign our approach for providing products/services to tribes located in Alaska
- Develop communication mechanisms to address the issue of horizontal equity
- Review the effectiveness of the survey effort to determine what changes should be made for next year's survey

Appendix

IRS Satisfaction Survey

OMB Control#1545-1

The Office of Indian Tribal Governments (ITG) within the IRS is asking for your input to help us evaluate how well we are serving your needs. Your responses will help us identify the areas where we can improve our products/services. Thank you for your input.

Please pick a number from the scale to show how much you agree or disagree with each statement and write it in the space provided to the right of the statement.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5

- 1 It is hard to call and reach the Tribe's assigned Specialist. _____
- 2 The Tribe rarely needs to talk to more than one employee to get an answer to a question. _____
- 3 It is easy to access the IRS internet site. _____
- 4 It is hard to get the tax information by calling the Office of ITG. _____
- 5 Forms, Publications & other written materials are available on the IRS internet site. _____
- 6 Tax materials like Forms and Publications are easy to understand. _____
- 7 Specialist(s) provide explanations the Tribe can understand. _____
- 8 The IRS internet site is not user friendly. _____
- 9 The Office of ITG assists the Tribes in avoiding penalties. _____
- 10 The Office of ITG does not explain how tax law changes will affect the Tribe. _____
- 11 The Office of ITG works with the Tribe to help resolve any tax issues. _____
- 12 Assistance given by the Office of ITG interferes with Tribal sovereignty. _____
- 13 The Office of ITG seeks to build a respectful relationship. _____
- 14 The Office of ITG wants to work with the Tribe to administer the tax law. _____
- 15 The Office of ITG does not clarify tax issues that are unique to the Tribe. _____
- 16 The Office of ITG helps the Tribe comply with the tax law. _____
- 17 The Office of ITG is respectful of Tribal culture. _____
- 18 The Office of ITG is courteous in its contacts with the Tribe. _____
- 19 The Tribe will contact the Office of ITG when it has a problem and/or question. _____
- 20 The Office of ITG works with the Tribe on a government to government basis. _____
- 21 The Office of ITG treats all Tribes equally. _____
- 22 The Office of ITG works with the Tribe to explain filing requirements to tribal members. _____
- 23 The Office of ITG provides a timely response to the Tribe's questions. _____
- 24 The Office of ITG does not keep the Tribe informed of its actions to resolve an issue. _____
- 25 The Office of ITG fairly applies the tax law to the Tribe. _____
- 26 Overall, the Tribe is satisfied with the products and services provided by the Office of ITG. _____

Please answer yes or no to the following question :

- 27 Within the past year, has your tribe had its books and/or records reviewed in a compliance check or audit by the IRS? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- 28 Using the map on the reverse side, please provide the area where the Tribe is located: _____.

PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT NOTICE: We estimate that the time required to fill out this questionnaire will average 10 minutes. The Paperwork Reduction Act requires IRS to display an OMB control Number on all approved information requests. Comments should be directed to Tax Documents Coordinating Committee, Western Area Distribution Center, Rancho Cordova, CA 95743-0001.

Please use the space provided below for comments.

AREA MAP for Question 28

