

Share Survey Results + Solicit Input

After you understand your survey results, it is important to share the results with your team and solicit their input. Following up with your team provides the opportunity to: 1) confirm your understanding of the survey results, 2) understand the reasons for the results, and 3) ask for ideas to improve your organization. Taking a collaborative approach helps to create a sense of ownership and builds buy-in for change. There are many ways to successfully share survey results and solicit input. This guide offers one approach along with considerations for success. Please note that for organizations with bargaining unit employees, supervisors should ensure all labor relations obligations have been met in accordance with law and existing collective bargaining agreements.

Share Survey Results and Solicit Input in 4 Steps

- 1** **Share a Summary of Results**
Share the main findings during a staff meeting
- 2** **Solicit Input to Understand the Results More Deeply**
Give employees a chance to review the results and identify what they see as most critical
- 3** **Narrow Down to a Few Topics for Further Input**
Compare employee input to your insights and prioritize topic areas
- 4** **Solicit Ideas for Improvement**
Ask for input on ideas to improve the organization



1 Share a Summary of Results

A good practice is to share a high-level summary of your survey results in a staff meeting, and then follow up with more detailed information by email. The tone of your communication should be genuine in your appreciation for the feedback and your desire to make the organization better. Consider including the following in your initial communications about the survey results:

- ❑ **Thank Your Team For Their Feedback:** Employees took time to provide candid feedback about their experiences, so let them know that you appreciate their feedback.
- ❑ **Share Your Insights:** Let your team know that you have reviewed the results. If you believe that you have a good understanding of your organization's key strengths and opportunities, summarize your insights for your team. What story do the results tell? A good practice is to share a written summary that outlines a few highlights from the results, from your perspective. If it was hard to gain insights into your organization based on your survey results alone, or if you are not sure which challenges are most pressing, be candid about needing your team's help to understand the results.
- ❑ **Be Open to the Possibility That You Missed Critical Insights:** Let your team know that you would like their input to help you fully understand the results and to get their ideas for how your organization can improve. Consider whether you have the option to bring in someone from outside your organization to help gather input.
- ❑ **Outline Your Basic Plans and Next Steps:** Next steps may include: 1) asking employees to review survey results, 2) outlining the process for providing input and suggestions, 3) planning for organizational improvement, and 4) implementing action plans. Be realistic about the goal, which is to identify one or two areas for improvement.

Decide What to Share

Following up by email with a summary of what you shared in your staff meeting and more detailed information about your survey results will give your team an opportunity to review the survey results for themselves and thoughtfully consider the input that they want to share.

Managers often ask whether they should share the full results report versus a summary of the findings with their team. Either approach can be appropriate. What matters is that you are transparent and you provide enough information for your team to review and interpret the results for themselves. Your team provided the feedback; they know what the problems are. Withholding information may create the impression that you are hiding something. Being transparent with the results also promotes employee ownership and involvement in improving the organization.

Sample Talking Points for Sharing Survey Results and Next Steps

Scenario 1:

Favorable Results Across All Indicators: Favorable Responses, Trends, & Comparisons

- Thank you sharing your feedback on the OPM FEVS.
- Overall our OPM FEVS results were very positive.
- We have clear strengths in the areas of _____.
- Some of our most favorable items include _____.
- Although the survey results did not reveal any major challenges, I would like you to review the results and consider ways to refine what we are already doing well, and whether there are opportunities to improve that were not captured by the survey.
- I am going to email you the results report (or a detailed Summary of the results) and then there will be several opportunities for you to provide input.
- You are welcome to set up a one-on-one meeting with me to discuss your thoughts about the survey, or send me your input in an email.
- We will also plan to talk about your ideas for improving that area in one of our next staff meetings.

Scenario 2:

Moderate Favorability with No Change and Comparable to the Parent Organization

- Thank you sharing your feedback on the OPM FEVS.
- Overall our OPM FEVS results were consistent with last year and comparable to the results for [parent organization] overall.
- The survey results did not reveal any major strengths or challenges, but I believe there may be opportunities to improve.
- I would like you to review the results, consider your experiences working in this group, and identify what you believe are our top strengths and the top one or two areas in most need of improvement.
- I am going to email you the results report (or a detailed Summary of the results) and then there will be several opportunities for you to provide input.
- You are welcome to set up a one-on-one meeting with me to discuss your thoughts about the survey, or send me your input in an email.
- We will also have at least two focus group-style meetings to discuss the results in more detail and talk about your ideas to improve.
- I am looking at options to bring in someone from outside our team to facilitate these discussions.

Scenario 3:

A Mix of Favorable and Unfavorable Results

- Thank you sharing your feedback on the OPM FEVS.
- Our survey results show a mix of strengths and opportunities for improvement.
- We have clear strengths in the areas of _____.
- Some of our most favorable items include _____.
- We have opportunities for improvement in the areas of _____.
- Some of our least favorable items include _____.
- I would like you review the results and identify what you believe are our top strengths and the top one or two areas in most need of improvement.
- I am going to email you the results report (or a detailed Summary of the results) and then there will be several opportunities for you to provide input.
- You are welcome to set up a one-on-one meeting with me to discuss your thoughts about the survey, or send me your input in an email.
- We will also have at least two focus group-style meetings to discuss the results in more detail and talk about your ideas to improve.
- I am looking at options to bring in someone from outside our team to facilitate these discussions.

Scenario 4:

Unfavorable Results Across All Indicators: Unfavorable Responses Trends, & Comparisons

- Thank you sharing your feedback on the OPM FEVS.
- Our survey results indicate that we have a number of opportunities for improvement.
- There were a few areas in particular that jumped out to me, including _____.
- I'd like to get your input on what you believe are the top one or two areas in most need of improvement.
- There is a clear need to make some changes and I am committed to working with you to address our most pressing challenges.
- I am going to email you the results report (or a detailed Summary of the results) and then there will be several opportunities for you to provide input.
- You are welcome to set up a one-on-one meeting with me to discuss your thoughts about the survey, or send me your input in an email.
- We will also have at least two focus group-style meetings to discuss the results in more detail and talk about your ideas to improve.
- I am looking at options to bring in someone from outside our team to facilitate these discussions.

Solicit Input to Understand the Results More Deeply

The goal is to understand what your employees believe is most critical and why. Ideally you have a good working relationship with your team, but there are circumstances where it may make sense to bring in someone to facilitate focus groups with your team. Facilitating a conversation about the underlying reasons for your survey results can be challenging for a number of reasons:

- It can be difficult for the manager due to the sensitive nature of the information or challenging logistics.
- It can be uncomfortable for employees and they can fear retaliation for speaking out.
- It requires facilitation skills and thoughtful planning.

Options for Soliciting Input

Getting candid input from your team can be difficult. Consider whether you have the option to bring in someone from outside your organization to facilitate a focus group.

- Reach out to your agency's Human Capital Office to see if there are facilitators available
- Solicit team members' for facilitation experience and request that they are part of this process
- Partner with other employee resource groups or internal support teams
- Ask other agency groups about their method for obtaining input that can be sensitive or difficult



If an outside facilitator is not possible, give your team options to provide input in a way that is most comfortable. It can be advantageous to collect initial input in a format other than a group setting, such as a one-on-one discussion or ideas by email. Then, follow up with a group discussion to brainstorm ideas for improvement on one or two focus areas.

Key Questions to Ask to Better Understand Survey Results

Ask your team to consider the survey results and their general experiences at work. The following questions may be used to solicit initial input:

- What stood out to you in the survey results?
- What is working well for you?
- What are the top 1-2 areas in most need of improvement?
- What was on your mind when you answered this question?
- What do you find most challenging about this issue?
- If you had to pick one of the following opportunities for improvement, which would have the greatest impact on your day to day work and why?

If survey results are generally favorable, ask questions to uncover hidden opportunities:

- What do we need to do to refine what we are already doing well?
- Are there are opportunities to improve that were not captured by the survey?

The goal in this step is understand what your employees believe is most critical and why.

Considerations for Soliciting Input

Asking open-ended, thought provoking questions will invite honest conversations that will help you gain deeper insight into the issue and what can be done to improve. The considerations below are useful for facilitating discussions to understand survey results and soliciting ideas for improvement.

Do:

- ❑ **Model Openness and Transparency:** Talk openly about the results. How you talk about survey results sets the tone for receiving continued honest employee feedback and their ideas for improvement. Being open builds trust.
- ❑ **Be Objective:** Do your best to play the role of a facilitator or impartial observer. Be mindful that sharing your opinions might discourage employees from sharing dissenting opinions.
- ❑ **Be Inviting:** Make employees feel as though you're talking with them instead of at them. This will help foster an ongoing conversation.
- ❑ **Ask Questions:** Approach discussions with genuine curiosity about your team's concerns and ideas. Strive to understand by asking open-ended, thought provoking questions.
- ❑ **Understand the Power Difference:** Speaking about the survey results in a group setting or even one-on-one with a manager is uncomfortable for some people. Give your team options to provide input so people can contribute in a way that is most comfortable.

Don't:

- ❑ **Don't Pressure Employees:** Employees should never feel like they have to provide additional input on survey results, but it is important to encourage their participation in honest discussions.
- ❑ **Don't Try to Change Opinions:** This is not the time to persuade employees to change their opinions. Surveys reveal employee perceptions, and right or wrong, perception is reality.
- ❑ **Don't Make the Survey Results an "Employee Issue":** Don't blame employees for the survey results or push all of the responsibility to fix the issues on to employees. As a manager, you play a role in the climate of your organization. Strive for a collaborative approach to understand and resolve the issues.
- ❑ **Don't Get Defensive:** This is a time for humility and learning. Being defensive will shut down communication and will make it harder for you to effectively address the issues.
- ❑ **Don't Joke About the Survey:** Making light of the survey process or results will undermine your credibility as a leader. Employees want you to take the results seriously, even if they make comments to the contrary.
- ❑ **Don't Try to Identify Who Said What:** Survey responses should be confidential. When reviewing employee survey results, the conversation should never turn into speculations about who said what.

Narrow Down to a Few Topics for Further Input

At this point, you should have enough insight to narrow down to a few topics for further discussion. Narrowing down to a few topic areas should be a collaborative process between you and your team. Having an outside facilitator lead this discussion can be beneficial. The following steps can be used to facilitate prioritization:

1. Create a list of the opportunities for growth based on the survey results and input from employees.
2. Group the opportunities for growth into meaningful clusters or topic areas.
3. As a group, prioritize the topic areas. It can be advantageous to use a prioritization exercise to systematically evaluate each topic. See the *Prioritization Exercise* to the right for one approach.

Consider the following when prioritizing your topic areas:

- Importance:** Survey results and/or input from your team suggest that this area is problematic, there is an expectation that it needs to be addressed, or it is important to organizational goals, priorities, and the mission.
- Impact:** It is a driver of key outcomes and affects employees or groups.
- Practical:** It is feasible to address and it will gain support from key stakeholders.

Prioritization Exercise

Evaluate each issue against the criteria in the table below using a 1-5 scale, where 5 is the highest score and 1 the lowest. Add the ratings for each issue. A Higher 'score' may provide rationale for focusing on that issue for improvement.

This exercise can be completed individually or through group consensus. Using the individual approach, everyone makes independent ratings, and then ratings are combined before calculating the total. Using the group consensus approach, the facilitator leads a discussion on each issue and everyone decides on the best rating as a group.

| Issue | Importance | Impact | Practical | TOTAL |
|----------|------------|--------|-----------|-------|
| Issue 1: | | | | |
| Issue 2: | | | | |
| Issue 3: | | | | |
| Issue 4: | | | | |
| Issue 5: | | | | |

4 Solicit Ideas for Improvement

After you narrow down to a few topics, solicit ideas for improvement in each topic area. The goal at this step is to generate ideas for you to solve your organization's most pressing opportunities for growth. Facilitating a discussion about ideas for improvement can be difficult. It requires a plan with structured questions to prompt ideas. Consider whether you are able to bring in an outside facilitator to lead this discussion (see page 4 for considerations and tips). The facilitator should focus on guiding the discussion on the top 2-3 focus areas identified during the prioritization exercise.

Team Brainstorming Exercise

This exercise offers a structured approach to brainstorming ideas for improving the focus area(s). This exercise frames the discussion in a positive and forward-focused way to promote ideas and limit the re-hashing of organizational challenges.

Explain the Purpose: *"The purpose of this exercise is to generate ideas for improving ____."*

Present the Opportunity for Improvement: Use the forward-focused question: "How might we improve ____"? What would have to happen in order for you to score a '5' (or Strongly Agree) in this area on the next survey?"

Step 1 - Generate: Individually spend five minutes generating ideas on sticky notes. Put the sticky notes on a wall. Ask your team to imagine that focus area has been improved and it is no longer an issue. What did it take to get there? Have you ever seen this focus area function really well? What were the circumstances or activities that made it work?

Step 2 - Share: As a group, spend 15 minutes reviewing and sharing the ideas on the sticky notes. Look for idea themes and cluster the sticky notes in a meaningful way.

Step 3 - Choose: On separate sticky notes have employees write one idea that they like the best and put the sticky notes on a wall. Discuss the top ideas, looking for areas of agreement. Ask your team to agree on two ideas on which to move forward to step 4.

Step 4 - Prototype: As a group, take 20 minutes to elaborate on the two ideas, thinking through the steps required to make the idea a reality. Identify a few action steps to support each idea.

Step 5 - Capture Input and Communicate Next Steps: Thank employees for their ideas and let them know the next step will be for the team to work together to create an action plan. Schedule a follow up meeting with your team to create the action plan.