

2008 Stakeholder Survey: Departmental Performance



Overview

The Department of Treasury and Finance undertakes a biennial survey of stakeholders. The stated objective of the survey process is to assess the effectiveness of the Department's interactions with stakeholders and provide strategies for improvement in communication and liaison.

The primary purpose of the survey in 2008 was to measure the success of the Department in achieving its four critical success factors being communication, professionalism, reliability, and accountability. The survey asked a number of quantitative questions in relation to the CSFs and a number of "leading" questions specific to each branch of the Department. The survey results were enhanced through the conducting of a number of focus groups and interviews with stakeholders to obtain further qualitative information from stakeholders.

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1 Stakeholder selection and survey methodology

The stakeholders selected to participate in the survey were selected by the Department on a branch-specific basis. A total number of 197 surveys were sent to stakeholders with a response rate of 49 per cent.

Each selected stakeholder was requested to complete the survey for a particular branch of the Department. Respondents were required to rate the branch's performance from 1-5 in relation to the critical success factors, where:

- 1 = consistently does not meet performance expectations
- 2 = inconsistent in meeting performance expectations
- 3 = meets performance expectations
- 4 = meets and sometimes exceeds performance expectations
- 5 = consistently exceeds performance expectations

A general overview of the results from this survey indicates that the majority of stakeholders believe Treasury meet their performance expectations in all critical success factors. The overall department results indicate a consistent and slightly improved performance from prior surveys.

2 Summary of overall results

Table 2.1 shows the summary of results for each CSF across the department. The scores have been calculated using the average of the results for all surveys received. The results give an indication of stakeholders' satisfaction across the whole department for the previous twelve months.

Table 2.1: Departmental CSF Results

<i>Critical Success Factor</i>	<i>Overall Rating 2008</i>
Communication	3.64
Professionalism	3.92
Reliability	3.55
Accountability	3.72
DEPARTMENT TOTAL	3.71

Table 2.2 provides the 2006 and 2004 overall department results for comparison with the 2008 survey. These results indicate a performance which is consistent with prior surveys.

Table 2.2: Departmental Results Overall

	Overall Rating 2004	Overall Rating 2006 ¹	Overall Rating 2008
DEPARTMENT TOTAL	3.63	3.67	3.71

A general overview of the results from this survey indicates that the majority of stakeholders believe Treasury meet their performance expectations in all CSFs with total averages varying from 3.64 to 3.92.

3 Summary of positive survey findings

A summary of the positive findings of this report are as follows:

- Stakeholders are very complimentary of Treasury staff indicating that they are professional, courteous and aim to be helpful in all their dealings. Stakeholders particularly value the personal relationships they have with Treasury staff.
- While the results varied depending on the branch, a large number of stakeholders commented on the responsiveness of the Department, particularly in relation to requests made of branches, or deadlines which the branch is required to meet.
- Stakeholders commented, in almost all instances, that the expertise of Treasury staff, and therefore the information and advice provided by them, is of a high standard.
- Stakeholders indicated that they could see the Department's internal values in operation in the vast majority of their dealings with Treasury staff, particularly in relation to excellence.

Stakeholder feedback

"I consider the Department overall to be the most professional in the state service. The staff are capable, knowledgeable, committed and achieve high standards of output."

"Excellent working relationship with staff over an extended period of time. Staff are very helpful. Good relationships with staff which includes respect from both parties."

"Excellent inter-personal skills of branch members."

¹ Obtained from Jeffrey Human Resources Report – Department of Treasury and Finance Stakeholder Survey 2006. As CSFs have changed in 2008, no comparison data is available for prior periods for each individual CSF.

4 Risks identified from survey findings

The report notes a number of key findings as highlighted by the survey process and makes a number of recommendations to improve the Department's interactions with stakeholders. Specifically, this report highlights four key strategic risks to the Department. These risks encapsulate the key themes for improvement across the Department and bring attention to those issues which are fundamental to successful stakeholder management. These four risks are outlined below.

The risk that the Department does not understand or misinterprets the needs and objectives of some stakeholders resulting in reduced effectiveness and satisfaction in interactions with stakeholders, and the potential for reputation and relationship loss.

The risk that policy development proves to be ineffective and/or inefficient due to a lack of early stakeholder consultation in the process.

Stakeholder feedback

“Consulting expertise outside of Treasury may provide a more balanced workable practical outcome which achieves the regulatory objectives of Treasury, but also takes into account the practicalities of stakeholders. Branch needs to understand the industry they are working with, particularly in relation to understanding the impacts of policy decisions. Would like to see consultation with industry prior to policy development or negotiation. Need to develop an “outcome focus”, rather than Treasury dictating the “how” industry can assist with possible solutions.”

“We have a mutually beneficial business relationship where the operator and regulator work well together.”

“The branch fails to understand the effort required to meet the reporting requirements or comply with the direction in relation to policy directives.”

Where the Department relies on stakeholders for input into reportable information, the risk that through failure to engage stakeholders effectively and on a timely basis, information, data and policy communicated by the Department is inaccurate or insufficient.

The risk that stakeholders will not engage in future processes to assess and improve the Department's interactions with stakeholders if the Department fails to act on and/or communicate actions back to stakeholders.

5 Recommendations from survey findings

In relation to the identified risks, this report makes four key recommendations:

1. The need to enhance relationship management with stakeholders.

The general sense repeatedly communicated by stakeholders through the results and qualitative data was that Treasury staff are exceptionally professional in their approach, and demonstrate excellence in process and “rule” based outcomes. The element lacking for stakeholders however is relationship. Specifically, it is recommended that the Department address the need to prioritise communication with stakeholders which specifically addresses and communicates the objective of understanding stakeholder needs. This includes the need for outcomes produced by the branch making reference to the branch’s balancing of stakeholder needs with the objectives of the Department.

2. More specific and open communication with stakeholders, even in instances where the outcome is not able to reflect the wishes of stakeholders.

The majority of stakeholders wish to be consulted verbally in person rather than via other methods of communication.

The need to engage and consult stakeholders early in the policy development process. If the Department wishes to effectively achieve regulatory or policy outcomes in the most effective and efficient manner possible, it is important that expertise and viewpoints outside of the Department are obtained early in the policy development process.

3. Branches that produce reportable information, which relies on stakeholder input, review in detail their timelines and processes undertaken to make these requests of stakeholders.

Discussions with stakeholders would assist in developing a mutually acceptable process. It is important that the processes and timelines utilised by the Department for these types of requests are structured such that the key outcome is the accuracy and sufficiency of the final reportable information.

4. The survey process be reviewed at a strategic level prior to being completed in 2010.

Factors highlighted in this report such as stakeholder selection, survey content, communication strategies, stakeholder fatigue with process, and overall approach could be considered as part of the review. In addition, it is recommended that the outcomes and action plans developed by the branches, and an overall Departmental response to stakeholders, be communicated as a matter of priority to stakeholders at the completion of this process.

6 Departmental response to survey recommendations

As noted in Section 5 above, the survey responses resulted in four key recommendations by the survey consultant. Treasury is committed to addressing these recommendations with the following actions:

1. The need to enhance relationship management with stakeholders.

The Department is working toward greater consultation with stakeholders by taking a proactive approach to communication and taking greater care in explaining timeframes for requests for information.

Individual branches within the Department are implementing strategies of regular meetings with major stakeholders to ensure ongoing feedback and information is shared between parties. This will also allow Treasury to explain decisions in greater detail and ensure stakeholders have the opportunity to raise any concerns or views from their perspective.

2. More specific and open communication with stakeholders, even in instances where the outcome is not able to reflect the wishes of stakeholders.

Where possible, the Department will undertake the majority of communications with stakeholders either face-to-face or over the phone. Where initial contact is made via email, branches will endeavour to follow up with a more personal and verbal approach.

When seeking large amounts of information, branches are also looking to adopt more qualitative methods such as focus groups to increase interaction with stakeholders and improve the quality of information obtained.

3. Branches that produce reportable information, which relies on stakeholder input, review in detail their timelines and processes undertaken to make these requests of stakeholders.

All branches work to deadlines in producing both internal and reportable information. Where this information relies on stakeholder input, the Department is committed to communicating with stakeholders as early as possible to advise of the upcoming request. This communication will also include an explanation of the process involved and any related deadlines so that stakeholders can be made aware of how their input is relevant and valuable in achieving the wider objective.

4. The survey process be reviewed at a strategic level prior to being completed in 2010.

The Department will be reviewing the stakeholder survey process for the 2010 survey in 2009 to ensure a full investigation into the process and the results. The review will focus on improving the following areas of the survey:

- format of the survey – including examining options such as questionnaire style, focus groups, and broad consultation forums to gain qualitative data;
- timeframes for internal preparation for the survey as well as stakeholder responses;
- determination on the value of the current performance measuring tools;
- consideration of stakeholder fatigue and how stakeholders are selected; and
- how the Department's response to feedback is communicated to participating stakeholders.

In recognition of these comments, all 197 stakeholders selected for the survey, including those that did not respond to it, have been provided with a short summary of the report findings, together with a link to this expanded summary of the survey findings.