



SESSION 1:

OPINION SURVEYS AND REGULATORY INITIATIVES

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OECD Workshop, Istanbul, Turkey
June 21, 2010



Purpose of the Presentation

1. Overview of Public Opinion Research (POR) in the Federal Government of Canada (procedures and planning)
2. Drivers for opinion surveys in regulatory environment
3. Opinion surveys and regulatory programs
4. Stakeholders' perceptions and regulatory reforms
5. Regulatory reform: implementation of the Cabinet Directive on Streamlining on Regulation (CDSR)
6. Lessons learned from survey design



Procedures for Planning Public Opinion Research

As outlined in the Communications policy:

Federal organizations planning to contract public opinion research must:

- Provide a ministerial approved annual public opinion research plan to the Privy Council Office's (PCO)
 - The plan is updated on a quarterly basis
- Describe proposed research project
 - A clear statement of the need for undertaking the project
 - An indication of how the results will be used
- Forward, on request, research instruments, an analysis plan, survey data, data tables and reports to PCO for review;



Procedures (continued)

As outlined in the Communications policy:

Federal organizations must:

- Ensure that the survey does not to support electoral voting intentions, political party preferences or ratings of the performance of a political party or its leaders;
- Have the contractor certify that deliverables comply with the political neutrality requirement;
- Document all POR activities in Research Information Management System.

Drivers for doing opinion surveys

In general, public opinions matter for the following reasons:

Drivers

Level of knowledge



Rationale

To design an effective awareness campaigns

Level of confidence in regulatory system



To gauge the public support towards the regulatory efforts

Level of recognition of responsible regulatory authority



To assess the degree of transparency and accountability

Level of interests among citizens and businesses



To develop a balanced approach with respect to regulatory consultations, actions and responses



Opinion Surveys and Regulatory Programs

In recent years, selected opinion surveys have been effective in measuring the following regulatory programs:

- Food Safety and Food Labelling
- Legislative amendments to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act to modernize the immigration system
- Regulation of Biotechnology Products
- Survey of Regulated Facilities related to the Environmental Emergency Regulations

Stakeholders' Perceptions and Regulatory Reforms

- In Canada, federal regulatory activity is governed by the CDSR
- Consultative efforts allow for stakeholders to have the opportunity to take part in open, meaningful, and balanced consultations at all stages
 - the size and scope of the consultative process depend on the proposed regulations and the number of people or groups affected by them.
- According to the *Guidelines for Effective Regulatory Consultations*, common approaches to regulatory consultations include:
 - focus groups
 - interviews
 - surveys
 - request for written submissions and
 - websites /forums



Regulatory reform: Implementation of the CDSR

- To assess the progress of the implementation of the *CDSR*, a mid-term evaluation was conducted in the Fall of 2009;
- A mix of qualitative and quantitative methodology was used including an opinion survey with two types of questions:
 - 11 closed-ended questions; 4 opened-ended questions;
 - Advantages of closed-ended questions:
 - easier to analyze
 - more specific
 - provided consistent meanings among respondents and
 - consumed less time to respond.
 - Disadvantages of closed-ended questions:
 - suggested ideas that the respondent would not otherwise have;
 - respondents were given simplistic responses to complex issues;
 - respondents with no opinion or no knowledge may have been able to answer.



Regulatory reform: Implementation of the CDSR

- Survey methodology:
 - on-line survey over 3 weeks period with 2 reminders
- Sample size = 70 representatives of client departments / agencies (D/As)
- Responses were weighted by the volume of regulatory submissions
- Response rate= 43% (n = 30)



Findings from the survey

- About half of all respondents had less than 3 years of experience with regulatory reforms;
- High level of satisfaction, expressed by over 50% of respondents, was associated with the advice provided on how to meet the requirements;
- A significant number of respondents were not aware of:
 - referral services to external consultants to conduct cost-benefit analysis (CBAs), performance measurement and evaluation plans (PMEPs) or Regulatory Impact Analysis Statement (RIAS);
 - availability of funding over a short period of time;
 - direct assistance to develop PMEPs, CBAs and peer reviews.
- Overall, 4-in-10 respondents attributed the improvements of their organization to Treasury Board Secretariat – Regulatory Affairs Sector for:
 - CBAs, PMEPs, service standard, coordination / cooperation and administrative requirements.



Lessons learned from the survey design

- To develop choices for closed-ended questions, conduct a pilot test using open-ended questions to build well thought-out and clearly-stated choices;
- If appropriate, introduce a few screening questions to determine if the respondent is qualified to answer questions of interest;
- To improve response rate, consider following up with a telephone reminder;
- Conduct a pre-test survey;
- Improve sample size by building and updating a list of email addresses.

Key challenges:

- High turn-over of staff within the regulatory environment;
- Survey coverage in terms of functions involved as part of the regulatory process.