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## Executive Summary

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The City of Fort Collins uses its Citizen Survey to gather feedback and suggestions from Fort Collins citizens about the quality of service they receive from the City departments that serve them. But for City departments that primarily serve internal customers, no comparable data collection tool is utilized to measure customer satisfaction.

### Background

The City's initial concept was to develop an online survey to collect internal services data. The committee overseeing this project met with department representatives to discuss the concept and get input on the functions they wanted to have rated. The committee also met with Dr. David Gilliland, CSU marketing professor and survey expert, to discuss the concept and different options for collecting the data.

After meeting with the City's Strategic Issues Team (SIT), the decision was made to conduct focus groups in the short term to obtain initial qualitative information on internal services and to consider proposing a statistically valid survey for the next budget cycle (2010/2011).

The City contracted with marketing company Linden to conduct the focus-group project.

### About the Focus Groups

During the last week of January and the first week of February 2009, Linden conducted a series of eight focus groups to gather insights from City employees for the purpose of gathering feedback and constructive suggestions for the following departments:

1. City Manager's Office
2. City Attorney's Office
3. City Clerk's Office
4. Communications and Public Involvement Office
5. Human Resources Department
6. MIS Department
7. Operations Services Department
8. Finance Department

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## Objectives

The primary objectives of the focus group project were threefold:

1. To collect feedback and suggestions specific to each of the service areas that Table 1 displays for the eight targeted departments.
2. To rate each of the following aspects of customer service, using a scale of Very Good, Good, Bad, Very Bad, in each service area:
  - Willingness to help
  - Level of knowledge/expertise
  - Promptness in responding
  - Effective delivery of service
  - Makes you feel valued
3. To explore the perceptions, opinions, and experiences of each focus group member about the quality of customer service they've received from the targeted departments in each service area.
4. To use the results for the purpose of improving internal processes and overall customer service between the departments within the organization.

**Table 1. Service Areas by Department**

Department	Service Area 1	Service Area 2	Service Area 3	Service Area 4	Service Area 5
City Manager's Office	Service Area Requests (SARs)	Strategic Direction	Organizational Communications	Policy & Project Management	
City Attorney's Office	Document preparation	agenda items	Advice		
City Clerk	Council agenda Preparation	Paper Records & Info via Web	Boards & Commissions Staff Liaison Support		
Communications & Public Involvement	Cable 14	Communications & Marketing			

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**Table 1. Service Areas by Department (continued)**

Department	Service Area 1	Service Area 2	Service Area 3	Service Area 4	Service Area 5
Human Resources	Quality of Service	Overall Customer Satisfaction	Timeliness		
MIS	Helpdesk	Technical Support (troubleshooting via phone, in person, Website support)	ERP (JD Edwards) Support, Technical Access	Organization-Wide Apps (GIS, Accela, SIRE, Docman, etc.)	
Operations Services	Custodial	Facilities (repairs & maintenance)	Fleet	Project Management	Real Estate
Finance	Purchasing	Payroll	Accounting/Accounts Payable	Risk Management/ Safety & Workers Compensation	

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### Key Findings, Implications, and Recommendations

1. With respect to all departments targeted in this study, participants acknowledge a high level of respect and value for the services these departments deliver to internal customers.
2. Participants expressed appreciation for the opportunity to engage in discussions about internal services and are interested in receiving follow-up information about the focus groups, the findings, how the information gathered will be used, and what steps might follow as a result of this study. The City has a prime opportunity to use this information as a spring-board to improve communications and dialogue—in addition to the quality of internal services—across the organization.
3. Sufficient staffing is a common concern about many (but not all) departments. Participants face the fact that there will be freezes and budget cuts to contend with, especially in today's economy, but in several cases, participants stated that the lack of staff or type of staff positions (e.g., fulltime-permanent vs. temporary) negatively impacts the quality of service they require of the department to successfully complete their job. MIS, Communications & Public Involvement, the City Attorney's Office, and Human Resources are the departments that participants identify as most needful of additional staffing.
4. Improved communication is a ubiquitous need across all departments that provide internal services. Participants provided the following recommendations:
  - Promote two-way engagement and collaboration, instead of one-way "telling" or demanding
  - Reach everyone in the organization in the ways they want to receive communications (e.g., in print, online, in person, via phone, email)
  - Strive for consistent and timely communications at all levels within the organization and hold supervisors and managers accountable for pushing information out to their employees and ensuring that everyone is informed
5. "One size doesn't fit all" was a common theme that participants addressed within the focus groups. Too many departments try to force compliance into specific frameworks and processes that don't work for their internal customers. Participants would like for departments to treat them in the same way they would treat external customers: Be flexible and find the best way to serve your customers.

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6. Flatten the organization and spread out responsibilities, accountability, and authority to:
  - Reduce bottlenecks
  - Work more collaboratively across departments
  - Take advantage of the talent residing within departments where it makes sense to relieve staffing shortages and work more efficiently
  - Place responsibilities, accountability, and authority with those employees who are best qualified to drive successful completion
7. Keeping council focused and setting realistic expectations when working with the City organization is another area participants flagged for improvement throughout the focus groups.
8. At a glance: top improvements by department
  - CMO: strategic direction
  - CAO: department-dedicated staff and specialists
  - CCO: interpersonal relationships
  - CPIO: strategic direction
  - MIS: staffing
  - HR: ITMS and communication
  - Operations Services: Fleet services
  - Finance: communication

## Methodology and Procedures

The focus groups took place at the City's 215 N. Mason Street location, on January 27, 29, February 3, 5, and 6, 2009. One hundred participants attended the 90-minute sessions according to the schedule in Table 1.

**Table 1. Focus Group Schedule**

Session	Department	Date	Time	Room
1	Operations Services	January 27, 2009	10:00-11:30 a.m.	1A
2	Finance	January 27, 2009	1:30-3:00 p.m.	1A
3	City Clerk's Office	January 29, 2009	10:00-11:30 a.m.	2A
4	MIS	January 29, 2009	1:30-3:00 p.m.	1A
5	Human Resources	February 3, 2009	10:00-11:30 a.m.	1A
6	Communications & Public Involvement	February 3, 2009	1:30-3:00 p.m.	1A
7	City Attorney's Office	February 5, 2009	1:30-3:00 p.m.	1A
8	City Manager's Office	February 6, 2009	10:00-11:30 a.m.	1A

### Recruitment

The City recruited individuals for the sessions through a two-step process:

1. The City asked each of the targeted departments to recommend 15–20 candidates that they consider primary internal customers.
2. The City sent out email invitations to each potential candidate asking them to participate. The City scheduled no more than 15 participants to each focus group and allowed participants to attend at most two different sessions. Fewer than 10% of the participants attended more than one session.
3. Once the invitation to attend was accepted, 87% made attending the session a priority in their day.

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## Methodology and Procedures

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### Logistics

The same moderator conducted all sessions, and a non-participating note-taker attended each session. Linden audio-recorded the sessions for proprietary use in report preparation and notified participants about the recording at the start of each session. The City provided light refreshments in each session.

### Focus Group agenda and Discussion Guide

Linden worked with the City to develop the focus group agenda and discussion guide. Below is an outline of the agenda and the topic areas for each session. Please refer to individual group reports for more details about each session, and to Appendix A for a sample of the Discussion Guide used.

#### **Outline of agenda and Key Discussion Topics**

- I. Welcome & Overview (5 minutes)
- II. Introductions & Warm-Up Activity (5 minutes)
- III. Overview of Critical Services Provided by Target Department (10 minutes)
- IV. Service Area Drilldowns and Ratings (65 minutes)
- V. Closing Exercise (5 minutes)

### Reporting

Linden prepared individual reports for each of the targeted departments as part of the overall Report of Findings. Departmental reports include specific details that departments can use to review their customer satisfaction data.

#### **Group Report Content Outline**

- I. Overview of department and services provided
  - A. Departmental connections
  - B. One-word descriptions
  - C. Most-critical, most-valued, and most-needed services
  - D. Customer Service Scorecard
- II. Key Findings and Implications
- III. Service Area Drilldowns