

The Advisory Panel On Telephone Public Opinion Survey Quality



Final Report
February 1, 2007

Prepared by:
Sage Research Corporation
2600 Skymark Ave., Bldg. 6, Suite 102
Mississauga, ON L4W 5B2
Tel: (905) 625-7663



Public Works and
Government Services
Canada

Travaux publics et
Services gouvernementaux
Canada

Canada 

The Advisory Panel On Telephone Public Opinion Survey Quality

Final Report

February 1, 2007

Prepared by:
Sage Research Corporation
2600 Skymark Ave., Bldg. 6, Suite 102
Mississauga, ON L4W 5B2
Tel: (905) 625-7663

Published by Public Works and Government Services Canada

March, 2007

For more information, please contact 613-992-8545

Internet version: <http://www.pwgsc.gc.ca>

Ce document est également disponible en français sous le titre

Comité consultatif sur la qualité des sondages d'opinion publique par téléphone – Rapport final

Catalogue Number: XXXX

ISBN: XXXX

© Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada,

represented by the Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2007

This publication may be reproduced for personal or internal use only without permission provided the source is fully acknowledged. However, multiple copy reproduction of this publication in whole or in part for purposes of resale or redistribution requires the prior written permission from the Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0S5 or copyright.droitdauteur@pwgsc.gc.ca.

Table of Contents

PREFACE	6
INTRODUCTION	7
STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR: Pre-Field Planning, Preparation and Documentation	12
STATEMENT OF WORK	12
PROPOSAL DOCUMENTATION	14
QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN	18
PRETESTING	20
STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR: Sampling and Data Collection	22
DEVELOPMENT OF SAMPLING FRAMES AND SAMPLING	22
REQUIRED NOTIFICATION TO POTENTIAL SURVEY RESPONDENTS	24
DATA COLLECTION: Interviewer Training	30
DATA COLLECTION: Project Briefing	32
DATA COLLECTION: Incentives/Honoraria	34
DATA COLLECTION: Call-backs	35
DATA COLLECTION: Setting a Limit for Unilingual vs. Bilingual Interviewers/Third Language Interviewers	36
DATA COLLECTION: Monitoring and Validation of Fieldwork	37
STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR: Response Rate	40
OVERVIEW	40
REPORTING OF RESPONSE RATE	41
NONRESPONSE BIAS ANALYSES	41
RESPONSE RATE TARGETS	44
MONITORING RESPONSE RATE DURING DATA COLLECTION	46

**STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR:
Data Management and Processing**..... 50

 DATA ENTRY 50

 CODING 51

 DATA EDITING/IMPUTATION 52

**STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR:
Data Analysis/Reporting and Survey Documentation**..... 53

 DATA ANALYSIS/REPORTING..... 53

 BACK-UP, RETENTION/SECURITY OF DATA 55

 SURVEY DOCUMENTATION 57

CONCLUSIONS..... 59



PREFACE

Many people contributed to the proposed standards and guidelines for telephone public opinion surveys and deserve recognition.

Public Works and Government Services Canada gratefully acknowledges the eight-member Advisory Panel who reviewed existing standards and guidelines and who contributed their knowledge and expertise in the development of the proposed standards and guidelines for the Government of Canada. They are:

Market Research Industry	Don Ambrose <i>Consumer Contact</i> Barry Watson <i>Environics Research Group Limited</i>
Academic Community	Scott Bennett <i>Carleton University</i> André Blais <i>Université de Montréal</i>
Government of Canada	Karen Blain <i>Human Resources and Social Development Canada</i> William Blois <i>Environment Canada</i> Amanda Hayne-Farrell <i>Health Canada</i> Jacqueline (Jackey) Mayda <i>Statistics Canada</i>

Our thanks go to the team of professionals from Sage Research Corporation, Anita Pollak and Rick Robson, who directed this process, developed all the materials for the Panel’s deliberations, led the discussions with the Panel, analyzed the results and wrote the report.

Several members of the Public Opinion Research Directorate contributed at different stages—Nat Stone, Hélène Bleau and Suzanne Marshall.

For more information, please contact the Public Opinion Research Directorate of Public Works and Government Services Canada at 613-943-5130.

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Public opinion research is used for a variety of purposes, including policy development; marketing, communications or advertising initiatives; program evaluation; client satisfaction measurement; and product development. The overall value of contracted research coordinated through Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC) has trended upward for the past two decades, peaking at \$29 million in fiscal 2004-05.

PWGSC plays a dual role with respect to public opinion research, acting both as technical and coordinating authority, and as contracting authority. The Public Opinion Research Directorate (PORD) within PWGSC is the technical and coordinating authority. PORD plays a supportive role to departments by providing advice and assistance on, among other things, qualitative and quantitative research approaches and standards of the market research industry. PORD also plays a key role in developing the terms of reference for the establishment of contracting tools such as standing offers to facilitate the purchase of research services by Government of Canada (GOC) departments and agencies. Notably, under the existing policy framework for the GOC, each department is responsible for the management and quality of the research it commissions.

Over the last few years, PORD as well as a number of departments have raised various concerns pertaining to survey quality issues. Within the Government of Canada or the research industry at large, there is no single, standard set of data quality indicators, nor are there accepted norms or benchmarks to judge the quality of data resulting from surveys of public opinion. Instead, individual researchers or survey organizations appear to use their own criteria and judgment. Consequently, there are no set standards or existing benchmarks to ensure a common approach to assessing data quality and reporting data quality indicators in survey reports commissioned by the GOC.

Despite the lack of universally agreed standards and benchmarks, a wealth of knowledge on survey quality elements already exists both within and outside of government. Drawing on this knowledge and expertise would assist the GOC in gaining a better understanding of existing knowledge and practice with respect to survey quality indicators, benchmarks and documentation. One of the major issues of concern to the public opinion research community is declining response rates to telephone surveys, this being the most often used data collection methods for quantitative public opinion by GOC departments and agencies.

The overall purpose of this initiative is to provide advice and guidance to PORD on survey quality standards and benchmarks appropriate to public opinion telephone survey research conducted for the Government of Canada. PWGSC's objectives are:

- To use this knowledge to improve requirements for Government of Canada public opinion telephone survey data quality under the next wave of contracting tools planned for 2007.
- To provide departments and agencies commissioning telephone survey research with standard contract requirements that each could choose to incorporate as standard requirements into contracts with public opinion research suppliers.

To meet the needs of PWGSC, the decision was made to establish a Technical Advisory Panel. The objectives for the Panel were to:

- Review and discuss current Canadian and international standards, benchmarks, and documentation practices related to telephone survey quality, with a particular focus on response rates and population coverage.
- Review and discuss the Government of Canada context for undertaking public opinion research.
- Advise on appropriate telephone survey quality standards for Government of Canada public opinion research.
- Advise on specific benchmark levels of quality indicators for public opinion research telephone surveys conducted by private sector suppliers on behalf of the Government of Canada. These benchmarks will be considered for inclusion in the 2007 renewal of the contracting tools for public opinion research.

The role of the Panel was also to reach consensus where possible, although this was not an essential outcome of the work of the Panel.

METHOD

The Panel consisted of eight members representing the Government of Canada, the market research industry and the academic community, and was chaired by a representative of PWGSC.

Market Research Industry	Don Ambrose <i>Marketing Research and Intelligence Association (MRIA)</i> Consumer Contact, Chairman Barry Watson <i>President Elect</i> <i>Marketing Research and Intelligence Association (MRIA)</i> Environics Research Group Limited, President	
Academic Community	Scott Bennett <i>Faculty of Public Affairs</i> Carleton University André Blais <i>Département de science politique</i> Université de Montréal	
Government of Canada	Karen Blain <i>Senior Advisor, Public Opinion Research</i> <i>Public Affairs and Ministerial Services Branch</i> Human Resources and Social Development Canada William Blois <i>Senior Public Opinion Coordinator</i> <i>Strategic Communications Planning and Evaluation</i> Environment Canada Amanda Hayne-Farrell <i>Senior Public Opinion Research Advisor</i> <i>Public Opinion Research and Evaluation Division</i> Health Canada Jacqueline (Jackey) Mayda <i>Assistant Director, Children’s Surveys</i> <i>Special Surveys Division</i> Statistics Canada	

Sage Research acted as facilitator and prepared the report on the Panel’s deliberations. The Panel met twice and participated in a series of four online bulletin boards. Other methods including telephone calls and emails were used to consult with members of the Panel, as appropriate.

The Panel considered standards and guidelines from the following organizations:

Public Works and Government Services (PWGSC): *Request for Standing Offer/Supply Arrangement (RFSO)*

Statistics Canada: *Quality Guidelines (October 2003)*

Marketing Research and Intelligence Association (MRIA): *Standards and Rules of Practice for Corporate Members of the Marketing Research and Intelligence Association (MRIA)*

Marketing Research and Intelligence Association (MRIA): *Response Rate Calculation Formula*

Phoenix Strategic Perspectives, Inc.: *Research, Analysis & Recommendations Concerning Response Rates in Public Opinion Research (September 2004)*

Phoenix Strategic Perspectives, Inc.: *Best Practices: Improving Respondent Cooperation for Telephone Surveys (September 2006)*

U.S. Government Office of Management and Budget (OMB): *Proposed Standards and Guidelines for Statistical Surveys*

U.S. Government Office of Management and Budget (OMB): *Questions and Answers when Designing Surveys for Information Collections (sections related to response rate)*

U.S. Bureau of Labour Statistics/University of Michigan.: *Telephone Survey Methods: Adapting to Change (American Association for Public Opinion Research [AAPOR] Conference Paper)*

International Standards Organization (ISO): *International Standards 20252, Market opinion and social research – Vocabulary and service requirements (April 2006)*

European Society of Opinion and Market Research (ESOMAR): *How to Commission Research*

The Panel's work took place between August 25, 2006, and January 15, 2007.

OVERVIEW OF THE STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES DEVELOPED

The report summarizes the recommendations of the Panel, expressed as standards or guidelines:

Standards	Practices that should be requirements for all telephone studies conducted by the Government of Canada
Guidelines	Practices that are recommended , but would not be requirements; that is, known good practices or criteria that serve as a checklist to ensure quality research <u>but</u> are not necessarily applied to every study

While it was not the mandate of the Panel to reach consensus, the Panel did do so on most aspects of data quality standards and guidelines. As well, in a number of instances, the Panel recommended standards and guidelines that exceed the requirements in other jurisdictions. Examples include the recommended standards and guidelines for:

Proposal documentation

Coverage rate

Response rate

Survey documentation

The standards and guidelines are organized under five main sections:

1. Pre-field Planning, Preparation and Documentation
2. Sampling and Data Collection
3. Response Rate
4. Data Management and Processing
5. Data Analysis/Reporting and Survey Documentation

STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR: Pre-Field Planning, Preparation and Documentation

STATEMENT OF WORK

OVERVIEW

There was agreement on the principle stated by ESOMAR on the role of the Statement of Work (SOW) in the research process:

The more relevant the background information the client can give the researcher, the greater the chances are that the project will be carried out effectively and efficiently.

The SOW is also an important document as an internal Government of Canada tool:

- A guide to the overall research process for the department
- A central document of the statement of the needs of the department

There was agreement that:

- There are some types of information that must be included in all SOWs, i.e., requirements
- Guidelines may also be useful in certain areas to help coordinators/clients (in departments where there is no coordinator) clearly specify the project requirements, albeit without:
 - a) Duplicating the research proposal
 - b) Making the process of preparing SOWs too cumbersome

There was also the suggestion that an “exhaustive” SOW checklist should be developed for all types of studies, not just telephone surveys:

- For use as a reminder to coordinators/clients, including the cross-referencing of items on the checklist to sections of policies
- As a way of assessing the supplier proposal in general and as it relates to data quality issues

OUTCOME OF PANEL'S DELIBERATIONS

There was consensus among the Panel on the following standards and guidelines for the Statement of Work (SOW).

STANDARDS

A Statement of Work must be a written plan that provides the research supplier with the following information:

STANDARDS	INFORMATION TO BE INCLUDED:
Background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide context for the research, describe events/decisions that led to why research is required/being considered. Include information/available resources to help the contractor better understand the subject matter of the survey (e.g., past research, web sites).
Purpose, how the research will be used	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide information on the types of decisions or actions that are to be based on the findings, i.e., (a) what activities it will support; (b) how; (c) who will use the information. Include any internal or external commitments regarding scheduling/timelines that may rely on the research findings (e.g., reporting requirements, events).
Objectives, research questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include, in the information requirements, the broad research questions that the study needs to answer. This will help in the development of the survey questionnaire, the data analysis and the report outline. If relevant, prioritize the information required to ensure data quality in the event of budgetary or scheduling constraints.
Target population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wherever necessary and possible, indicate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The demographic, behavioural and/or attitudinal characteristics of the target population for the survey Information or estimates available on the size/incidence of these groups
Data collection method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If relevant, ask for input on other data collection approaches.
Deliverables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It should list major project milestones with anticipated timelines. At minimum, details of reporting should reference all requirements identified by PORD.
Sample size assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To help the supplier generate a reasonable sample size assumption for costing purposes, at least one of the following indicators must be included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sample size required Level of precision required Study budget

GUIDELINES

Other useful information that may be included in a Statement of Work include the following:

GUIDELINES	INFORMATION TO BE INCLUDED:
<i>Sample considerations</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide any relevant information on the sampling frame, e.g., the availability of lists.• Indicate any requirements to be taken into consideration in finalizing the total sample size and structure/composition of the sample, e.g., regional requirements, demographic groups, population segments (those aware vs. those not aware; users vs. non-users, etc.).
<i>Data analysis</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify any need for special analyses, e.g., segmentation.

PROPOSAL DOCUMENTATION

OVERVIEW

There was general agreement among the Panel members that the elements currently listed by PWGSC as requirements for proposal documentation in its RFSO should be expanded, particularly the section on Methodology.

While several organizations (ESOMAR, MRIA, ISO) have described specific elements for what should be included in proposal documentation, there was no one organization Panel members agreed best met the desired level of detail for Government of Canada proposal documentation. Accordingly, the elements suggested by the Panel for proposal documentation represent a hybrid from these various organizations.

With regard to the statement of requirements for proposals, it should be kept in mind that some contracts for telephone surveys are issued to firms on the Standing Offer, while others may be awarded through competition on MERX or as sole source contracts (e.g., syndicated studies, omnibus surveys). Firms on the Standing Offer will have already committed to certain practices, which may be required elements in a proposal. For example, it was suggested that various quality control procedures be spelled out in proposal documentation. Firms on the Standing Offer may have already committed to some of these as their standard practices. In this case, we suggest they not be required to describe these again in each proposal they submit.

In the proposed standards on the next page, an asterisk has been placed next to items that might already have been addressed by firms in their Standing Offer submissions. Firms awarded telephone survey contracts who are not on the Standing Offer would be required to address all required elements in their proposals. Firms on the Standing Offer would be required to address only the non-asterisked items.

Several themes emerged in the Panel discussion:

- 1) A clear delineation between the SOW and the Research Proposal:
 - The SOW is what the GOC needs to know, from whom and when it needs this information
 - The *Research Proposal* is what the research firm will do to meet the needs of the GOC and how this will be done

Therefore, there is much more detail required from research firms in the Proposal Documentation than is required from the GOC in the SOW.

- 2) There is a need to find a balance between all information required by GOC as responses to a SOW, and ensuring all data quality issues are also covered, but without overburdening either the research supplier or the GOC. It is also for this reason that we made the point above regarding differences between those firms on the Standing Offer and those not on the Standing Offer.
- 3) Especially among the GOC Panel members, there was a perceived need for consistency in proposal documentation to make it easier to assess/confirm that the research firm has provided all the categories of information and the detail required in each proposal.

In light of this, the Panel as a whole recommended standards rather than guidelines for proposal documentation.

There was no consensus on whether or not different requirements should be established for Proposal Documentation based on survey characteristics such as type of study, expenditure level, etc.:

- In principle, there were suggestions that studies that need to be more rigorous (e.g., estimate of size populations vs. comparing options) or that deal with complex issues generally require more detailed documentation.
- In practice, the level of detail provided in any research proposal will necessarily vary depending on the above characteristics, i.e., these types of projects require more in-depth explanations of the various aspects of the survey design.

OUTCOME OF PANEL'S DELIBERATIONS

There was consensus among the Panel on the following standards for proposal documentation.

STANDARDS

The research proposal must be a written document that uses the following headings and provides the following information, at a minimum. Note that an asterisk identifies the areas that apply only to proposals from firms not awarded PWGSC's Quantitative Standing Offer.

STANDARDS	INFORMATION TO BE INCLUDED:
A: Introduction	
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe the firm's understanding of the problem/issues to be investigated and how the GOC will use this information.
Research Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detail the information needs/research questions the research will address.
B: Technical Specifications of the Research	
Overview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a brief statement summarizing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> data collection method, including rationale for proposed methodology total sample size target population
Sample/Sampling Details	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide details related to target population: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the definition of the target population in terms of its specific characteristics and geographic scope, including the assumed incidence of the population and any key sub-groups the total sample size and the sample sizes of any key sub-groups Describe the sample frame, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the sample source sampling procedures any known sampling limitations and how these might affect the findings Explain respondent selection procedures. Indicate the number of call-backs and explain call-back procedures. Define respondent eligibility/screening criteria, including any quota controls.
Response Rate/Error Rate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State the expected response rate for the total sample and for key sub-groups, if relevant. State the level of precision, including the margin of error and confidence interval for the total sample and any key sub-groups. Indicate any other potential source of error based on the study design that might affect the accuracy of the data.

STANDARDS	INFORMATION TO BE INCLUDED:
-----------	-----------------------------

B: Technical Specifications of the Research (cont'd)	
--	--

Description of Data Collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State the method of data collection (in this case telephone interviewing). • Provide details on any incentives/honoraria, including rationale. • Describe how language requirements will be addressed. • *Describe quality control procedures related to data collection, including at minimum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment, training and management of field staff • Fieldwork validation methods and procedures • *Describe how: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The rights of respondents will be respected, including if relevant the rights of children, youth and vulnerable respondents • Respondent anonymity and confidentiality will be protected
---------------------------------------	---

Questionnaire Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide either an outline of the survey questionnaire or list the topics that will be covered in the questionnaire, including specifying the number of open-ends. • Provide an estimate of the length of the questionnaire. • Describe how the questionnaire will be pre-tested, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The objectives of the pre-test • The method for the pre-test, including the description of the types of interviewers/researchers that will conduct the pre-test interviews • The total number of interviews to be completed in total and by key sub-groups (e.g., language, age, gender) • How the results of the pre-test will be communicated to the GOC <p>Note: If no pre-test is to be conducted, a rationale must be provided.</p>
-----------------------------	--

Description of Data Processing/Data Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe any weighting required. • *Describe quality control procedures related to data processing/data management, including at minimum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data entry • Coding/coding training • Data editing • Data tabulation • File preparation/electronic data delivery
---	--

Data Analysis/Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe how the data will be analyzed related to the objectives/research questions, including any special analyses (e.g., segmentation). • *Provide an outline of the sections of the report.
Deliverables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List all deliverables including their coverage, scope, format, means of delivery and number of copies, including at minimum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questionnaire(s), including pre-test, if relevant • Data tabulation/processing • The report format(s), including the number of copies, language of report • The nature, location and number of presentations, including the language of presentations

Project Schedule	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a detailed workplan with dates and identify responsibilities.
-------------------------	---

C: Project Cost

- Project Cost** • Cost information must be presented in the format designated by PWGSC.

QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN

OVERVIEW

There was agreement that for questionnaire design only very broad standards and guidelines are required, and several reasons were given for why this overall approach should be adopted.

- It is unnecessary to develop standards/guidelines for questionnaire design because this is primarily the responsibility of the research firms.
 - a) The industry has good “rules of thumb” to follow relating to every aspect of questionnaire design.
 - b) Research firms already need to demonstrate their capabilities in the RFSO or an RFP by the requirement to provide both project credentials and references.
- It is both unrealistic and undesirable to impose either standards or guidelines on an activity, i.e., questionnaire development, that:
 - a) Is as much art as it is science
 - b) Needs to be tailored to the specific information needs of each GOC survey and the different departmental requirements in certain areas (e.g., inclusion of references to specific pieces of legislation is required in some departments but not in others)
- It is best left to the research industry to develop a set of standards and guidelines for questionnaire design, not the POR community in the GOC. Notably, though, the point was also made that the research industry itself does not have enough of a consensus on best practices upon which to base standards.
- There is a need to avoid creating a process that becomes unduly burdensome for both GOC and suppliers in terms of the level of effort, time and financial resources that are devoted to developing and finalizing survey questionnaires.

Some members of the Panel suggested it would be useful to have a questionnaire design “checklist” for internal purposes, i.e., a tool that would serve as a guide to questionnaire development for those with limited research experience and an aide memoire for experienced POR coordinators. The report prepared by Phoenix Strategic Perspectives, *Best Practices: Improving Respondent Cooperation for Telephone Surveys*, could serve this role, particularly for those with a limited research background.

One of the issues considered by the Panel was whether there should be standard demographic and socio-economic questions across GOC telephone surveys. The Panel agreed, *in principle* that:

- Whenever possible, standard demographic and socio-economic questions should be used in GOC surveys
- The use of this common approach across departments would help the GOC compare surveys for non-response bias

- It will be useful for the Government of Canada to have a database of standard questions accessible to GOC departments and research suppliers

However, there was no agreement on whether or not these types of questions should be requirements *in practice*, at least for the time being:

- The GOC Community of Practice will need to do preliminary work:
 - a) To inform and educate both internal clients and research suppliers on what would be standard demographic and socio-economic questions
 - b) To provide a glossary of standard definitions and classifications
- There are two dimensions to “standard demographic and socio-economic questions”—the questions themselves and the response categories. There was no agreement on standardization in practice on either of these dimensions.

At one level, it was suggested there could be standards on both dimensions, but only for studies with a general population target group.

At another level, (a) it was suggested that the questions could be standard but the response categories would need to be flexible, or that (b) both the questions and response categories would need to be flexible, i.e., guidelines only to meet the needs of the range of surveys undertaken by the GOC.

OUTCOME OF PANEL’S DELIBERATIONS

There was general agreement by the Panel on the following standards and guidelines for questionnaire design.

STANDARDS

- Survey questionnaires must be designed:
 - a) To collect only the information essential to the objectives of the study, and
 - b) To minimize the burden placed on respondents while maximizing data quality
- The following are required elements of all Government of Canada telephone survey questionnaires:
 - a) Inform respondents of (i) the subject and purpose of the study and (ii) the expected length of the interview
 - b) Identify the research firm and either the Government of Canada or the department/agency sponsoring the survey
 - c) Inform respondents that their participation in the study is voluntary and the information provided will be administered according to the requirements of the *Privacy Act*
 - d) Inform respondents briefly of their rights under the *Access to Information Act*, most importantly the right to access a copy of the report and their responses
- Firms are required to translate the questionnaire into the other official language (unless interviewing is to be unilingual), and where required into other languages. All translations must be in written form.

GUIDELINES

The following strategies may be used to achieve the standards.

- 1) The questionnaire is a reasonable length, e.g., surveys 20 minutes or longer can often result in lower cooperation rates.
- 2) The introduction to the survey and the respondent screening section are well-designed and as short as possible in order to maximize the likelihood people will agree to an interview.
- 3) Questions are clearly written and use language appropriate to the target group.
- 4) Methods to reduce *item* non-response are adopted (e.g., answer options match question wording; “other,” “don’t know” and “refused” categories are included, as appropriate).
- 5) The questionnaire is designed for clear and smooth transition from question to question and from topic to topic.

PRETESTING

There was consensus that in-field pre-testing should be required for all surveys using new or revised questionnaires. This recommendation is reflected in the standards below.

The Panel had differing views, though, on cognitive pre-testing and the circumstances under which these pre-tests should occur. Some felt that cognitive pre-testing should be required for all new and revised questionnaires unless it can be demonstrated that these have been previously tested using cognitive methods or supported by other means (e.g., past experience, academic literature). Others said that this should be assessed on a case-by-case basis depending on the survey, its purpose and budget. Given the differing views of the Panel, there was agreement to include guidelines for when this type of pre-testing should be considered along with more in-depth testing of the data collection and data capture processes.

The Panel distinguished between syndicated studies and omnibus surveys with regard to pre-testing requirements. For syndicated studies, it was felt that firms offering these studies should be required to demonstrate and document that the survey questionnaire has been pre-tested in some form. For omnibus surveys, the majority of Panel members suggested stating guidelines rather than standards given these factors.

- Pre-testing of questions is rarely an element in the standard costing formula for omnibus questions and thus would likely increase cost. Further, given the schedules for most omnibus studies, this would also likely increase the required time to finalize survey questions.
- Often these vehicles are used when:
 - a) Information is required on an urgent basis, or
 - b) Information needs can be addressed by a few question, or
 - c) Budget is limited

STANDARDS

- In-field pre-testing of all components of a new or revised telephone survey questionnaire that may influence data quality, respondent behaviour and interviewer performance is required.

- A periodic review of questionnaires used in ongoing or longitudinal surveys is required.

- A minimum of 30 pre-test interviews are to be completed in total, 15 in English and 15 in French.

Provision is to be made for the project authority to monitor pre-tests should they want to.

- The result(s) of the pre-test(s) must be documented, i.e., at minimum:

- A description of the pre-test approach and number of interviews completed
- A summary of the results including a record of the decisions/changes made as a result of the pre-test findings

- For *syndicated telephone studies*, research firms are required (a) to demonstrate that the survey questionnaire has been pre-tested and (b) to provide details on the pre-test approach and number of interviews completed.

GUIDELINES

For complex studies, highly influential surveys or surveys that are planned to be ongoing or longitudinal, a more complete in-field test of other components of a survey, not just the survey questionnaire, may be desirable. This may be a pilot test that, on a small scale, duplicates the final survey design including such elements as data capture, analysis of results, etc.

If there is a need to pre-test the questionnaire on criteria other than language, at least 4 should be completed with each sub-group.

Pre-test interviews should not be included in the final dataset unless (a) there were no changes to the questionnaire and (b) the interview was implemented in the exact same manner as in the final survey design.

Cognitive pre-testing (using qualitative methods) should be considered prior to field testing for new survey questionnaires or where there are revisions to wording or content of existing questionnaires, and particularly for complex surveys, highly influential surveys or surveys that are planned as ongoing or longitudinal. The main uses of cognitive pre-testing are:

- To provide insight into how respondents react to a questionnaire:
 - Their understanding of the wording of questions and the flow of the questionnaire
 - Their ability to respond to questions accurately
 - Their thought processes as they answer the questions
- To identify the impact of changes to an existing questionnaire (e.g., a tracking survey)

Whenever possible, schedule and budget permitting, *omnibus survey questions* should at least be pre-tested in-field. Whenever a pre-test had been conducted, the details of the pre-test should be documented, including the number of pre-test interviews completed.

STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR: Sampling and Data Collection

DEVELOPMENT OF SAMPLING FRAMES AND SAMPLING

The Panel discussion focused on sampling procedures as these relate to the development of sampling frames and to coverage rate.

There was general agreement to adopt a revised version of the MRIA standards for GOC telephone surveys for sampling procedures.

The Panel discussion on coverage rate considered OMB's numeric guideline in this regard:

Coverage rates in excess of 95% overall and for each major stratum are desirable. If coverage rates fall below 85%, conduct an evaluation of the potential bias.

The consensus among the Panel was not to adopt a numeric guideline for coverage rates, but rather to take the approach that for *all* surveys coverage rate must be discussed and documented, not just in those cases when coverage rate falls below a certain arbitrary threshold. This approach was judged to be realistic and transparent while also stating that the Government of Canada aims for the highest coverage possible.

There were three main reasons for deciding against a specific numeric guideline.

- There was some question whether coverage rates can be estimated with any degree of precision in general, let alone for different types of specialized audiences.
- Questions were raised as to how reasonable it would be to apply the same guideline to both general public surveys and surveys of more specialized target groups.
- A coverage rate of 95% overall and for each major stratum is not attainable in Canada when using a national RDD sample. MRIA research has found that “**no service plus cell only** households totalled 6% nationally (8.8% in B.C.) and is expected to be higher in '06.” This also clearly suggests that any coverage rate requirements would need to be reviewed periodically and possibly revised.

The following broad standard and guideline with respect to sample coverage were agreed to by the Panel:

- a) A requirement (i.e., a standard) for the research firm to identify any potential limitations of the sample frame by indicating who has not been included and why
- b) A guideline stating it is desirable, whenever possible, to have the research supplier provide an estimate of the percentage of the target population excluded from the frame

STANDARDS

Note that the following is based on the MRIA's revised sampling procedures. However, references to "MRIA members" have been replaced by "research firms" here and elsewhere.

1.0 Sampling Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All research firms must clearly state the target group (universe) definition for the research study and then clearly state the method used to obtain a representative cross-section sample of this target group. The use of convenience sampling may not be stated as a representative cross-section sample. If the cost of sampling low incidence target groups (e.g., users of low incidence brands) prohibits the use of the usual quota controls to ensure sample representivity, then such sampling limitations must be clearly stated (as they should for any sampling methodology).
1.1 Random Probability Sampling	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The list or sample source must be clearly stated, including any of its limitations/exclusions in representing the universe for the target sample and the potential for bias.• A full description of the sample design and selection procedures will be stated including:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sample stratification variables (if any)• Any multi-stage sampling steps taken (e.g., enumeration areas, followed by households, followed by respondents)• At each sampling stage, the method of attaining a systematic random selection shall be explained, and any subsets of the universe that have been excluded or underrepresented shall be stated (e.g., cell only phone households), although whenever possible, an estimate of the percentage of the universe that has been excluded or underrepresented should be provided• The number of call-backs and the call-back procedure should be stated• Respondent eligibility/screening criteria will be defined, including any quota controls used (e.g., gender)• Records of the disposition of the contact sample must be retained to show:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The size of the original contact sample• The proportion of the contact sample that was unusable/invalid (e.g., listing errors, number not in service)• The proportion of the valid sample that was unreachable after the specified number of call-backs• Other reasons for non-contact (e.g., language [other than one of the two official languages], deafness)• The refusal rate among reached sample• The proportion of unqualified sample• Mid-interview terminations• The total number of completed interviews• Assuming that proper probability sampling procedures have been followed, the sampling error should then be stated based upon a given sample size at a given confidence level, but research firms must take care to:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not mislead clients into believing that a sampling error quoted on the total sample will be the same as that based upon a subset of the total sample• Where possible, express sampling error in terms relevant to the specific nature of the most important or typical variables in a survey• State that there are many potential non-sampling sources of error and include reference to other possible sources of error in any study (e.g., interviewer effects, respondent effects) in order to not give a misleading impression of overall accuracy and precision

1.2 Quota Sampling

Quota sampling techniques are typically used for panel surveys and personal intercept studies to achieve sample representivity. Quotas may also be used to control representivity on other data collection methodologies.

- As for probability sampling, the list or sample source must be stated, including its limitations in representing the universe for the target sample.
- A full description of the regional, demographic or other classification variable controls used for balancing the sample to achieve representivity should be described.
- The precise quota control targets and screening criteria should also be stated including the source of such targets (e.g., census data or other data source).
- Deviations from target achievement should be shown in the report (i.e., actual versus target).
- Statements about sampling error can be made with the cautionary note that “quota sampling does not permit sampling errors to be estimated; the assumption is made that the quota sample represents population groups in the right proportions.” As for 1.1 above, the same points apply concerning not making misleading statements about data accuracy.

REQUIRED NOTIFICATION TO POTENTIAL SURVEY RESPONDENTS

OVERVIEW

There are some very specific requirements placed on both the research community and governments, either through self-regulation (e.g., requirements of membership in organizations like MRIA) or legislation (e.g., *Privacy Act*, *PIPEDA*).

With regard to telephone surveys conducted for the Government of Canada, these requirements are also overlaid by:

- Additional requirements placed on public sector research, which are either never or rarely issues when conducting research for private sector firms (e.g., access to information).
- The stated mandate and commitment of the Government of Canada for transparency and openness in all its dealings with the public.

There were a number of topics reviewed by the Panel in relation to what information should be provided to potential survey respondents, including:

- The MRIA standards related to “Member Companies’ Responsibilities to the Public”
- Standards and guidelines related to survey sponsor identification

OUTCOME OF PANEL’S DELIBERATIONS

There was consensus:

- To adopt a revised version of the MRIA standards for GOC telephone surveys
- To adopt a standard and guideline for survey sponsorship identification

There was no agreement reached by the Panel on the issue of requiring an explicit respondent consent to being interviewed. This is discussed at the end of this section.

STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES: RESPONSIBILITIES OF RESEARCH FIRMS TO THE PUBLIC

1.0 Respondent Rights

1.1 Consent

- Research firms must ensure that respondents are aware that their participation in the survey at all stages is totally voluntary. In order to do that, firms must make sure that the respondents fully understand the purpose of the call. Interviewers should therefore always clearly state their name (first name only or unique identifier) and the name of the research organization they are working for and answer any questions the respondents may have in an honest and non-deceptive way.
- All respondents must be advised that the interview may be monitored and/or taped for quality control purposes.
- When interviewing children (under 12 years of age) and young persons (12–15 years of age), research firms must first obtain parental/guardian consent. Special care shall be exercised for respondents who are considered to be otherwise vulnerable. (Details on data collection from children or vulnerable respondents are provided in section 5.)

1.2 Right to Refuse

- Research firms must respect the right of a respondent to refuse to participate in a survey, to refuse to respond to a question or to terminate the interview at any point. An interviewer trained for this purpose must handle subsequent contact with someone who refuses to participate. Research firms may, on the other hand, use reasonable methods to obtain the respondent's participation. This includes explaining the purpose of the research and offering to callback the respondents at a time that is more suitable to them if they are unable or unwilling to participate at the time of initial contact. Offering a monetary or gift incentive to encourage participation may also be an acceptable method to obtain respondent participation.

1.3 Avoidance of Harassment

- The research firm will take all reasonable steps to see that respondents are not in any way hindered or embarrassed by any interview, and that they are not in any way adversely affected as a result of it. Members must address sensitive subject matter in a way that will minimize the discomfort and apprehension of both respondents and interviewers.

1.4 Safety

- Research firms are responsible for getting indemnity agreements from their clients to ensure that clients accept responsibility for the safety of their product or service by indemnifying the research agency against any damages resulting from product/service use. When testing food, respondents should be screened prior to the research for any conditions that would prohibit their participation (for example allergies) and a list of ingredients should be available to them. When testing other types of products, detailed instructions on the product should also be available to respondents. Pressuring a respondent to test a product they do not want to try is totally prohibited.

1.5 Federal Legislation

- Research firms are encouraged to acknowledge and be in compliance with *The Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act*.

2.0 Respondent Anonymity and Confidentiality

- Respondent confidentiality must be preserved. Individually, respondents are not to be identified by name or any other identifying information, nor identified with their specific responses in any study without their verbal or written consent.
 - Research firms must assure respondents of the fact that their identity will not be divulged to the client. Respondents are entitled to expect such assurance and that this assurance will be respected by the research firm.

Under no circumstances are questionnaires or other material (e.g., magnetic media) containing respondent identity, or information that might allow respondents to be identified, to be released by research firms to clients or other third parties.
 - Exceptions to this rule could be considered if disclosure of these names is essential for the data processing, for verification of the original research, or to carry out further research. In such instances, respondent names or other information from which the respondent's identity could be deduced are to be retained and used only by marketing research companies for marketing research purposes.

The originating research company must endeavour that others will respect respondent confidentiality and the use of the name and information gathered for research purposes only. Steps should be taken to adhere as closely as possible to the principle of confidentiality of respondents.

Another exception to this rule could be considered if a respondent to a customer research study (using a client-supplied list) asks the interviewer to pass along some information, concerns or requests to the client. In such a case, once the respondent permission is granted, some personal information such as the respondent's name and phone number could be given to the client.
 - When recording or observation techniques are used, research firms must advise the respondent at the beginning of the interview (or during the recruiting stage if at all possible) that such techniques are used. Respondents' confidentiality must not be jeopardized by the use of such methods.
 - Client-supplied lists provided for specific projects must not be used for any other projects or for adding names to the research firm's databases. Those lists should be returned to the client upon completion of the project.
 - A respondent's personal data must not be used, disclosed, nor collected in any manner incompatible with the intended purpose of the research. This applies to all research firms' staff or personnel.

Care must be taken to keep information secure whether on hard copy, on computer or stored electronically.

The individual respondent identity must not be revealed to the client either alone or associated with a particular response without the express permission of the respondent sometime during the interview. If such permission is granted, the interviewer must record it.
 - If in doubt, or if advice is required on masking identities before turning over tapes, disks, punch cards or other materials containing some identifying information, the research firm should contact the MRIA Standards Chairperson.
-

3.0 Retaining Public Confidence/Limitations of Research Purpose

- Research firms should do everything in their power to gain, retain and increase public confidence in research organizations and the work they do. Interviews are to be conducted free of embarrassment, in an environment of trust and goodwill, and with a recognition of the respondents' right to privacy should they choose not to respond to a question or participate in the survey.
- In order to achieve this, interviewers on their part must:
 - Identify themselves and the company for which they are working
 - Tell the respondent that the survey is for research purposes only
 - Provide the name, address and telephone number of the company if requested by the respondent
 - Answer in an honest and non-deceptive manner questions that respondents may have
- Interviews shall be limited to the legitimate gathering of marketing and public opinion information relevant to the research. Unless explicitly stated at the outset and agreed upon by the respondent, information will not be used to sell or develop leads for marketing purposes or to compile mailing lists.

4.0 Company Identification

- All interviewers must identify themselves by their own first name only, or unique identifier, and the company name in an introductory statement for all telephone interviews. If requested by respondent, the interviewers are to provide the name, address and telephone number of the head office of the company.

5.0 Data Collection from Children or Vulnerable Respondents

General

- Research firms must take special care when interviewing children and young people and respondents who are considered to be otherwise vulnerable. A "child" is to be defined as "under the age of 12" and a "young person" as "aged 12-15."

5.1 Standard-ization of Guidelines

- The following guidelines are a resumé of the guidelines set out in the PMRS Rules of Conduct and the ICC/ESOMAR International Code and it specifies what such "special care" involves.
- When interviewing a child or young person, interviewers must obtain the consent of the parent or responsible adult (guardian, teacher, etc.) before the child/young person is approached for an interview. Sufficient information must be provided to the person responsible for the child/young person in order for them to make an adequate decision about giving such consent. The name of the person giving the consent should be recorded but normally it is not necessary to obtain the permission in writing.
- The adult consent allows the interviewer to approach the child/young person but does not give him the permission to interview them as the child/young person must have their own opportunity to refuse to take part in the research.
- When conducting telephone or Internet surveys, it might be difficult to determine the age of the respondent and to obtain the appropriate consent to do the interview. Despite those difficulties, research firms should still try to comply with the rules set out in this guideline.
- An exception is when it is not possible to obtain parental/guardian consent (e.g., street kids) and the benefits of the information are judged to outweigh the possible harm to respondents (e.g., youth engaged in risky behaviour).

5.1 Children's Safety

- The welfare of the children and young people themselves is the most important thing to consider. They must not be disturbed or harmed by the interview experience. Therefore, sensitive topics or issues that could upset the children and young people (e.g., relationships with other children or with parents, sexual activities, use of drugs or alcohol) should be dealt with special care.
- If children or young people are required to test products as part of the research, the responsible person must be allowed to see the products and to try them themselves if he or she wishes. In research involving testing of products, the members must make sure that:
 - The products are safe to consume or to handle
 - The child/young person does not suffer from any relevant allergy
 - Children and young people do not become involved in any illegal action (e.g., underage consumption of alcoholic or tobacco products)
 - There are no ethnic, religious or cultural barriers to the child/young person consuming or handling the products
 - Wherever possible, the research firm complies with the views of the parents or guardians about products they would not wish the child or young person to try
- It is recommended that some responsible adult (beside the interviewer) remains close—not necessarily in the same room—while the interview is carried out. The interviewer and researchers must be protected against any misunderstandings or possible allegations of misconduct arising from their dealings with the children or young people taking part in that project.

STANDARD AND GUIDELINE: SURVEY SPONSOR IDENTIFICATION

STANDARD

All survey questionnaires must identify the sponsor of the survey, either as the Government of Canada or as the department/agency commissioning the research.

GUIDELINE

Choose the sponsor identifier based on the objectives of the study and on which is more likely to result in a higher response rate.

The Panel also considered the issue of whether respondents should be asked explicitly for their consent to be interviewed. No consensus was reached on how to deal with this issue.

There was no agreement reached by the Panel on the following, either as a standard or a guideline:

All respondents must be asked explicitly for their consent to the interview (e.g., "may I continue?") and records shall be kept (e.g., as part of the questionnaire) to show that this requirement has been met.

To put this into context, explicit respondent consent or opt-in to a survey is a requirement in some departments and not in others. This requirement for some departments reflects their interpretation of the *Privacy Act*. The Panel recommended that this issue would best be dealt with by PWGSC in consultation with the Treasury Board Secretariat.

For the record, within the Panel there were two conflicting views with respect to requiring survey participants to explicitly state their consent to an interview:

- On one side of the argument, there was concern that requiring an opt-in question could adversely affect response rate. This concern stems from the challenge faced by the research industry in the design of questionnaires for the Government of Canada with respect to how to balance best practices of the industry with the needs of government that are dictated by either legislation or policies (either government-wide or at the departmental level). One case in point is the information required to be included in the introduction to a telephone survey. On the part of the research industry and among academics, it is a widely held belief, and supported by a body of evidence, that most respondents to a survey make the decision to participate or not participate in the first few minutes of the interview. Therefore, there is a direct relationship between the introduction to a survey and the response rate to a survey, i.e., a brief, well-designed introduction results in a higher response rate, while a longer, more detailed introduction results in a lower response rate in most telephone studies.

Presently, based on both the MRIA standards and common practice within the Government of Canada, survey introductions must:

- Provide interviewer and company identification
- Provide a brief description of the subject matter of the survey, the purpose of the survey and explain how the data collected will be used
- Provide assurances of confidentiality and anonymity
- Inform respondents their participation is voluntary

It was stated that to require the addition of a specific opt-in question (of any type) will not only add length to the introduction but also impact negatively on response rate and possibly data quality. It has been the industry experience that asking this type of question decreases cooperation rate.

- On the other side of the argument, there was concern that even though potential participants are told their participation in a survey is voluntary, some members of the public may assume that participation in a Government of Canada survey is mandatory and not voluntary. It was felt that by asking potential respondents explicitly to opt-in, there is at least an additional signal given that participation in the survey is at the individual's discretion. There was also one further argument to support an opt-in question related to data quality. There is the possibility that if participants believe a survey is mandatory rather than elective, their answers to some questions might less reflect their own opinions and more what may be socially acceptable responses.

DATA COLLECTION: Interviewer Training

There was consensus that a revised version of ISO standard 5.2 *Management, recruitment and training of fieldworkers* be adopted for interviewer training. Note: MRIA will also be adopting these standards.

STANDARDS

5.2.1 Management, recruitment and training of fieldworkers (general)

- When fieldwork is subcontracted, the following requirements shall be followed to ensure that the subcontractor follows the practices and standards in this section.
- The research service provider shall remain entirely responsible for all services carried out in connection with the project, including any part of the work that may be subcontracted and/or outsourced and services relating to this international standard, except where the choice of the subcontractor is beyond the control of the research service provider.
- The research service provider shall define procedures to select subcontractors, to establish contractual relations with them and to control the quality of the service provided.
- Subcontractors shall be briefed by the research service provider in such a way as will enable them to conduct the subcontracted parts of the research project in adherence with the contract and the present international standard.
- The research service provider shall evaluate the performance of subcontractors and maintain relevant records, including records of any unsatisfactory service received.

Note: These apply to both the research service providers who conduct their own management, recruitment and training of fieldworkers and those who subcontract or outsource fieldwork to independent data collection companies.

5.2.2 Data collection management staff

- Data collection management staff shall be appropriately trained for the tasks they undertake, including allocation of work, progress control, training and appraisal of fieldworkers and validation of work.
- Data collection management staff shall also be regularly appraised and given continuing training as required.
- The training given to, and the competencies of, data collection management staff shall be documented by the research service provider.

5.2.3 Fieldworker recruitment

- The research service provider shall evaluate the competence of potential fieldworkers on the basis of their previous work experience and qualifications, and/or a recruitment interview, and/or references from previous employment. The recruit's level of relevant experience, if any, shall be established for the work to be undertaken, including for specific projects. Competency evaluation may need to include language skills, including the ability to follow instructions in the languages to be used for data collection instructions, and competence equivalent to mother tongue in the languages to be used for data collection.

5.2.3
Fieldworker
recruitment
(cont'd)

- All relevant information relating to fieldworkers, obtained in the recruitment process or subsequently (e.g., training records, results of validation), shall be documented and retained whilst the individual carries out work for the research service provider and for one year thereafter.
- Whilst the above retention period of one year meets the requirements of this standard, other requirements, including legal requirements, can necessitate a longer retention period of fieldworkers' personnel records.
- Where fieldworkers are recruited through an employment agency, recruitment records may be less detailed but should show key skills and previous, relevant experience.

5.2.4
Basic training for
new fieldworkers

- Unless otherwise specified, all fieldworkers shall be given basic training to the level specified below. This training shall be provided by the research service provider, except where confirmation is received from another research service provider meeting the requirements of this standard that relevant basic training (for the tasks to be undertaken) has already been provided. The training methods shall be chosen by the research service provider, in accordance with the requirements below.
- The content and scope of basic training shall be appropriate to the nature of the work to be carried out (e.g., phone interviewing). If the fieldworker is used subsequently for different types of work (i.e., different from the type covered in the basic training already received), including the use of computer-assisted interviewing (CATI), appropriate additional basic training shall be given. Basic training shall include as a minimum:
 - An overview of the principles, goals and objectives of market, opinion and social research
 - How to approach a respondent including interviewer/respondent roles and identification of the interviewer, company and the survey
 - Interviewer behaviour and feedback techniques, and their impact on the respondents
 - Techniques to establish rapport and trust, and to maximize respondent cooperation; respect for respondent privacy rights
 - Techniques on conducting the interview, including how to ask questions in a non-directive way; probing, clarification and elaboration techniques; following questions as written and accurately recording responses; techniques on dealing with difficult respondents
 - Interview role playing and trial interviews (or other forms of data collection methods).
 - Where relevant, the use of computers (e.g., for CATI)
 - Training on how to accurately record call dispositions
 - Monitoring, verification, validation, and evaluation procedures
 - Thanking the respondents and closing the interview
 - Drawing attention to any pertinent issues/concerns raised by a respondent
- Where possible, interviewers should be monitored by data collection management staff on their first assignment after basic training (see 5.4.2), with feedback provided to the interviewer. If such monitoring or accompaniment is not undertaken, all work from the first assignment shall be validated in accordance with 5.4.

5.2.4
Basic training for new fieldworkers (cont'd)

- The minimum duration for basic training for phone interviewing (excluding additional organizational training, see 5.2.5) shall be 6 hours. Approximately half of the training shall be interactive to allow dialogue between trainer and trainee.
- Exceptionally, where the data collection tasks are considered to be very simple, the minimum duration of basic training may be shorter than specified above and may be combined with project briefing. Reasons for such shorter training shall be documented and if the fieldworker is subsequently to be used in another project, full basic training shall be given.
- The durations specified for basic training should be regarded as minimum levels and depending on the nature of work to be allocated, fuller training may be required.
- The basic training given to fieldworkers shall be documented including content, duration and the identity of the trainer. The trainee and trainer shall authenticate the training records by signature or in an equivalent manner.

5.2.5
Fieldworker organizational training

- In addition to basic training in accordance with 5.2.4, the research service provider shall train all fieldworkers in the specific requirements of the research service provider including how data collection is organized and managed. The methods of delivering this type of training and its content can be a matter for the research service provider but fieldworker personnel records shall show the organizational training given and how it is delivered. Note that organizational training may be linked to basic training or to briefing for the first assignment.
- Key requirements and general instructions to fieldworkers shall also be included in a document available to all fieldworkers and used by the research service provider.

5.2.6
Continuing training and appraisal of fieldworkers

- Fieldworkers who are regularly used by the research service provider (i.e., for five projects/waves or more in a calendar year) shall be appraised at least once a year. Less frequently used fieldworkers shall be appraised at appropriate intervals. Any such appraisal shall allow dialogue between the fieldworker and the research service provider's data collection management (face-to-face or by phone) and shall include feedback from validation of work. Note that effective appraisal can be continuous, with fieldworkers given feedback by data collection management after work is validated (e.g., by monitoring of phone interviewers).
- The appraisal should be based for example on the result of questionnaire editing, fieldwork validation or accompanied or monitored interviews. Appraisal may identify the need for further training of individual fieldworkers, or the need for such training may be identified in other ways.
- Appraisal reports and details of any additional training provided shall be documented and retained with fieldworkers' personnel records. Both parties shall authenticate that the appraisal/training has been completed by signature or in an equivalent manner.

DATA COLLECTION: Project Briefing

There was consensus that a revised version of ISO standard 5.3.4 *Project Briefing* be adopted by the Government of Canada for custom telephone studies. (The standard is also being adopted by MRIA.) However, there was no agreement reached on how these requirements should be applied to either omnibus surveys or to syndicated studies. Several Panel members did not feel qualified to comment

on what types of requirements should be placed on research firms providing these types of services. The views of other Panel members are summarized below:

- Two Panel members felt the standard should apply to both types of surveys, with one further suggesting that research firms be required to provide documentation on project briefing for both omnibus and syndicated studies.
- One Panel member felt providers of omnibus surveys should be able to demonstrate the same level of briefing on omnibus surveys as they do on other work, but did not feel the standard applied to syndicated studies.
- One Panel member did not consider it appropriate to impose this type of requirement on omnibus studies. For syndicated studies, this member's opinion was that potential purchasers of these products should ask firms about the steps taken to brief interviewers, but it should not be a requirement that the GOC only purchase studies from suppliers that conform to this standard.

STANDARDS

5.3.4 Project briefing

- Fieldworkers shall be given a briefing and/or instructions for each project (or the specifics for each wave of a project), even if they start to take part after it has already started.
 - The briefing and/or instructions shall include more detail (than is already part of the Introduction for survey respondents) on the background to the project, e.g., why it is being done, by whom and how the information will be used.
 - The briefing and/or instructions shall be the responsibility of a member of staff with a full understanding of requirements for the project.
 - While it is preferable to have briefing and/or instructions delivered face-to-face, these may be delivered by phone, by tape (audio or video), in writing or otherwise but records shall be kept to show the coverage of the briefing and instructions and that all fieldworkers allocated to the project have been briefed/instructed. Note that every effort should be made to avoid briefing and/or instruction in writing only.
- The briefing is to be of sufficient detail as to ensure that each interviewer is familiar with the questionnaire, sample and respondent selection, and potential problem areas in the administration of the survey. Interviewers should be familiar with the question wording before commencing with the interviews. Normal standards of practice include rehearsal interviews and pre-testing.
- The briefing and/or instructions for a quantitative project shall include, as appropriate, the following information:
 - the fieldwork dates
 - the sampling procedures
 - quotas to be covered
 - methodology
 - other special requirements of the project
 - instructions/conditions for administration of the questionnaire

DATA COLLECTION: Incentives/Honoraria

There was consensus that to maximize response rates and improve data quality, incentives (monetary or non-monetary) or honoraria may need to be used to encourage respondent participation. There was also agreement on the guidelines for the types of surveys/circumstances for which an incentive/honorarium may be appropriate.

There was general agreement that it is sufficient to require suppliers of syndicated studies to include in their reports information about any incentives/honorariums used.

GUIDELINES FOR INCENTIVES/HONORARIA

- 1.** Monetary incentives should be used only when there are strong reasons to believe that they would substantially improve the response rate or the quality of responses.
- 2.** The decision to use respondent incentives (monetary or non-monetary) or honoraria to gain respondent cooperation should carefully weigh the potential for bias in the study due to nonresponse against the potential that the use of incentives/honorariums can affect the sample composition (i.e., who agrees to participate in the survey) and/or the possibility that the response to some questions in the survey may be influenced.
- 3.** The use of respondent incentives (monetary or non-monetary) or honoraria may be considered as a strategy to improve response rates under one or a combination of these circumstances:
 - At later stages of the field process rather than for all interviews
 - When response burden is high or exceptional effort is required on the part of the respondent (e.g., when interviews exceed 30 minute in length, respondents are required to do some preparatory work for the telephone interview, the study is complex)
 - The target population is low incidence (e.g., 5% or less of the population) or the population is very limited (e.g., hydrogen and fuel cell end-users)
 - The population is made up of hard-to-reach target groups (e.g., physicians, CEOs, off-reserve Aboriginals, recent immigrants/newcomers)
 - When it can be demonstrated that:
 - a) There will be a cost saving, e.g., incentives/honoraria are less expensive than large numbers of call-backs
 - b) The use of incentives/honoraria is required to meet the study schedule

Note: Under no circumstances are employees of the Government of Canada to receive monetary incentives or honoraria.
- 4.** Consider the use of non-monetary incentives wherever possible and appropriate. These can include: colouring books for children’s surveys, a copy of the survey findings (e.g., the executive summary, survey highlights) for special-audience research. However, the type of incentive selected must in no way influence potential answers to survey questions.
- 5.** Monetary incentives/honoraria in the form of “cash” disbursements (either directly to the respondent or for example to a charity of their choice), gift certificates and entries in prize draws can be considered. The amount of the cash disbursement and gift certificates should be kept as low as possible, without compromising the effectiveness of the incentive/honorarium.

- 6.** The use of incentives (monetary or non-monetary) or honoraria for a survey will also require decisions and documentation as to:
- When incentives/honoraria will be provided, whether at initial contact or post-survey
 - To whom incentives/honoraria will be given, whether all contacts (whether or not they complete the survey) or only those who participate in the survey
 - How the incentives/honoraria will be paid out/distributed by the research firm and the associated cost for this disbursement (e.g., professional time and direct expenses)
- The type and amount of incentives/honoraria are to be documented in the final report.

DATA COLLECTION: Call-backs

There was consensus by the Panel on the following standard for Call-backs.

STANDARD

Unless circumstances strongly indicate a different number of call-back attempts and scheduling of call-backs is required, there will be a minimum of eight call-backs made, varying the day and time of each call.

There were however a number of observations made about this requirement for a minimum of eight call-backs:

- 1) Statistics Canada has conducted research that demonstrates eight call-backs “is sufficient to get appropriate coverage.”
- 2) A minimum of eight call-backs may be an appropriate requirement for public policy research but it was pointed out that this exceeds the industry norm. It was also noted that while increasing the number of call-backs may result in higher response rates, there is also evidence to support that lower response rates, in and of themselves, do not affect the validity of survey results.

While there was agreement on a minimum eight call-backs as a standard, some Panel members suggested that:

- a) It would be useful to compile data from call dispositions of GOC surveys for different target groups in order to determine the optimum number of call-backs in general, and specifically to review the cost/benefit ratio associated with number of contact attempts
- b) Statistics Canada’s research on contact attempts should be referenced as the rationale for PWGSC’s requirement for a minimum of eight call-backs

One Panel member felt a minimum of 10 call-back attempts may be appropriate.

- 3) It was also noted that:
 - There are some situations when the call-back requirement can conflict with the time available to conduct the fieldwork (e.g., immediate public reaction to a policy announcement)
 - Most omnibus and syndicated studies include less than eight call-backs

- Small scale studies, i.e., those limited in scope or with limited budgets, may neither require this level of rigour nor be able to afford this requirement
- Comparability of results may be compromised if this requirement represents a change in data collection procedures for ongoing surveys (e.g., tracking studies)

DATA COLLECTION: Setting a Limit for Unilingual vs. Bilingual Interviewers/Third Language Interviewers

The Panel was asked to comment on the following:

It is a common practice for survey research firms is to assign their bilingual interviewers to do the interviewing in areas where there are likely to be significant proportions of both Anglophones and Francophones (e.g., Montreal, Northern New Brunswick, Eastern and Northern Ontario).

Unilingual interviewers are then normally assigned to areas where there are much smaller proportions of linguistic minorities. In these areas, if the interviewer encounters a person from a linguistic minority, the respondent is asked if another interviewer (who speaks the respondent's official language) could call back to conduct the interview in that language.

This is a sub-optimal approach in the sense that this practice necessitates at least one more telephone call, which would necessarily reduce the response rate for linguistic minorities in these areas. This, however, has to be balanced against the cost of hiring more bilingual interviewers.

- a) Is there an appropriate limit in terms of the percentage of the area's total population that minority language represents up to which it would be considered acceptable for firms to use unilingual interviewers?
- b) Are there other solutions to this problem?

The Panel was also asked to comment on whether the same requirements or solutions should be applied to certain areas of Canada where there are high population concentrations that speak a third language.

There was consensus reached by Panel members on both issues.

1) Setting a limit for acceptance of unilingual vs. bilingual interviewers

There was agreement that only a guideline be established reflecting the following:

- In practice, having a language-qualified interviewer make the call-back has been the norm and is judged to have worked effectively; this procedure is also judged to have little impact on either cooperation level or response rate
- Allocation of staff is related to the requirements of each survey, as spelt out in the SOW and the Research Proposal; this already includes the requirement for firms to detail how they will meet language interviewing needs, whether typical or atypical; firms are also required to detail and demonstrate their bilingual capabilities and practices in their response to the RFSO

- This issue should be left to research companies to manage (i.e., this is an internal staffing and economic issue)
- Most of the Panel members did not judge this issue to be a significant problem and suggested there are unlikely to be perfect solutions via personnel allocation or technology

There was consensus to add the following guideline to the standard on call-backs.

STANDARD	Unless circumstances strongly indicate a different number of call-back attempts and scheduling of call-backs is required, there will be a minimum of eight call-backs made, at varying days and times.
GUIDELINE	Firms should take measures to reduce the number of call-backs due to language mismatches at initial contact.

2) Setting a limit for third-language interviewers

Panel members expressed many of the same views regarding a standard/guidelines for third-language interviewers as they had for setting requirements for unilingual vs. bilingual interviewers. However, there was consensus that:

- Neither a standard or guidelines be developed, i.e., when a survey requires third-language capabilities, this will be identified in the SOW and detailed in the Survey Proposal
- If PWGSC wishes to establish requirements for third-language interviewers, this should be part of the RFSO process

DATA COLLECTION: Monitoring and Validation of Fieldwork

There was consensus that a revised version of ISO standard 5.4 *Fieldwork Validation* be adopted for monitoring and validating fieldwork. Note that the MRIA will also be adopting this standard.

On the question of whether there should be different requirements for the monitoring of surveys based on survey characteristics, the Panel felt that the same minimum requirements should apply across all surveys, i.e., *The minimum monitoring validation level shall be 10% of the interviews/cases with at least 75% of the whole interview monitored/listened to.* This covers the contingency that a higher level of monitoring may be required based on criteria to be established in the design phase of the research survey.

STANDARDS

5.4.1 Fieldwork validation general

- The purpose of validation is to establish that data collection by fieldworkers has been carried out to project instructions including following questionnaires and general requirements (e.g., as covered in fieldworker training).
- Validation shall be carried out as soon as practical after the fieldwork (and not more than six weeks afterwards) and wherever possible before the resulting data are processed and/or reported to clients.
- Validation shall be organized by data collection management staff and in all cases validation shall be carried out by a second person (i.e., other than the fieldworker whose work is being validated).
- All data collection from each project (or wave) shall be validated using methods in accordance with 5.4.2 below. Validation shall take account of:
 - The need for the work of all recently recruited fieldworkers to be validated on their first project
 - The need for validation of regularly used fieldworkers so that their work is frequently validated but not necessarily for each project (results of validation may influence the frequency of subsequently validating an individual's work)
- Documented records for fieldworkers used by the research service provider shall identify the validation, including dates and projects, of each individual's work.
- Where validation identifies discrepancies or problems, corrective action shall be taken at *three* levels:
 - 1) At the *project* level – 100% of the interviewer's work must be validated and all invalid interviews rejected
 - 2) At the *fieldworker* level (e.g., retraining, future work allocation) – in the case of serious discrepancies (e.g., fabricated interviews), recent or concurrent work by the individual shall be subjected to rechecking and validation
 - 3) At the *client* level – if the problem identified through validation will affect data that has or will be delivered to the client, the client must be informed immediately
- Clients should be given every opportunity to arrange "checks" on the quality/validity of fieldwork subject to *PIPEDA*, *MRIA* requirements for respondent confidentiality and any other legal constraints that may apply.

5.4.2 Validation methods

- Depending on the type of data collection concerned, validation shall be undertaken as specified below, by means of checking the data records produced (e.g., questionnaires, CATI data files) and/or respondent re-contact (also termed backchecking) and/or monitoring.
- Checking of data records may include, as appropriate, completeness of the data records, keeping to samples/quotas, consistency of responses and comparison of responses against normal data or between fieldworkers. Checks may be made manually or by computer. This may be linked to the checking of associated records.
- Respondent re-contact shall include confirmation that the interview or equivalent took place and that instructions were followed, the length of the interview and responses to key questions including demographics and other qualifying questions related to quotas, etc. Re-contact may be by any medium involving direct communication with the respondent (e.g., face-to-face, by phone, by post or by e-mail).
- Monitoring shall be carried out on an ongoing basis, throughout the field period. Monitoring shall involve listening to interviews at the time they are being carried out, using appropriate equipment or listening to recordings of the interviews. Both interviewer and respondent shall be audible. Interviewers shall be aware that any interview may be monitored but not know whether a specific interview is being monitored. Where interviewing is multilingual, staff fluent in the relevant languages shall carry out monitoring. Monitoring is particularly suitable for phone interviews carried out from suitably equipped central locations (phone units).

5.4.3 Validation levels

- Validation shall be carried out to at least the levels below (depending on the type of validation). Validation levels shall be calculated on the basis of achieved interviews and achieved validations.
- For all projects where data collection is by interview, validation shall be by either re-contact or monitoring to the levels shown below, whether or not data records are also checked:
 - The minimum re-contact validation level shall be 10% of the interviews/cases
 - The minimum monitoring validation level shall be 10% of the interviews/cases with at least 75% of the whole interview monitored/listened to
- Every fieldworker working on a project should be validated or monitored.
- In exceptional cases it can be organizationally impossible to carry out re-contact or monitoring to the required level, or at all, or it may be considered contrary to respondents' interest. In such cases project records shall explain why this is the case and what other steps (e.g., checking data records) have been taken to validate data collection.

5.4.4 Validation records

- Reports shall be prepared on the validation carried out for each project/wave of project. The reports shall include:
 - The name of the person who carried out the validation
 - A description of the methods of validation used including what was covered in respondent re-contact, if applicable
 - The identity of the fieldworker whose work has been validated
 - A description of any discrepancies found
 - A record of corrective action/preventive action taken or planned at both the project level and fieldworker level
 - A confirmation that the required validation level has been attained (e.g., the number of interviews in total and number validated)
- Validation records shall be retrievable by both project/wave and individual fieldworker.

STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR: Response Rate

OVERVIEW

In the Panel's discussion of the various topics related to response rate, several broad themes emerged relating to the role and significance of response rate in telephone surveys.

- Response rate is one of a number of factors that potentially relate to telephone survey data quality. In the design and evaluation of telephone surveys, it is important to consider not only response rate, but also each of the other factors related to data quality, such as questionnaire design, sample coverage, data collection quality controls and so forth.
- Response rate is important as an indicator of potential risk to data quality in the form of nonresponse bias. If survey non-respondents differ systematically from respondents on key survey variables, then nonresponse bias exists. The magnitude of any nonresponse bias in the results will depend on both the size of the difference between nonrespondents and respondents on key survey variables, and on response rate.
- The Panel emphasized, however, that response rate should not be interpreted as a direct measure of data quality, but rather only as an indicator of potential risk to data quality. If nonrespondents and respondents do not in fact differ on key survey variables, then the results will not be subject to nonresponse bias, regardless of response rate level. Research to date has not shown a clear relationship between response rate level and data validity in public opinion telephone survey research. Based on a review of research, the *Best Practices: Improving Respondent Cooperation for Telephone Surveys* report prepared for PORD noted, "These studies suggest that higher response rates do not necessarily produce more accurate data, and that surveys with low response rates can still provide useful and valid data."

Consensus was reached by the Panel on standards and guidelines on the following aspects of response rate:

- Reporting of response rate: How response rate is to be calculated and reported
- Nonresponse bias analyses: When nonresponse bias analyses should be conducted
- Response rate targets: The role of response rate level in planning telephone surveys, both in general and in the context of specific projects
- Monitoring response rate during fieldwork
- Considerations related to whether or not to attempt refusal conversions

Note that the Panel made recommendations with respect to both unit and item response rates. The recommendation pertaining to item response appears in the section on nonresponse bias analyses. All other recommendations pertain to unit response.

REPORTING OF RESPONSE RATE

STANDARD

There was a consensus among the Panel in support of the following standard:

Response rate must be calculated using the MRIA Data Collection Response Rate Calculation Empirical Method, and response rate together with the associated record of call disposition must be included in the survey final report.

GUIDELINE

The MRIA has also adopted a modified version of the response rate calculation—the Estimation Method—that is recommended by Statistics Canada as a secondary method. The MRIA recommends that when the Estimation Method is reported, it be provided in addition to the Empirical Method response rate calculation.

The Panel agreed with the MRIA position, and noted that the Estimation Method can be useful in some circumstances. It was suggested that the decision whether to report the Estimation Method be made on a project-by-project basis. Accordingly, the following guideline was recommended:

Where the project authority and research firm judge it to be useful, the MRIA Estimation Method response rate can also be reported in addition to the Empirical Method response rate.

NONRESPONSE BIAS ANALYSES

It was noted in the earlier *Overview* section that while response rate is not a direct indicator of data quality, it is important as an indicator of potential risk to data quality in the form of nonresponse bias. In this context, the following summarizes the Panel’s recommendations with respect to nonresponse bias analysis.

- Every telephone survey should include an analysis of the potential for nonresponse bias based on information collected during the normal conduct of the survey.
- Several types of nonresponse analyses that could be conducted as part of a survey were identified, and it was suggested that the final determination of the analyses to be done be tailored to the characteristics of each particular survey.
- When the nonresponse analyses suggest there would be value in getting further information about the potential for nonresponse bias, the project authority could consider contracting additional research such as a follow-up survey of nonresponders or some other special data collection or analyses.

The following is a fuller statement of the standards and guidelines suggested by the Panel related to analysis of the potential for nonresponse bias.

STANDARD All survey reports must contain a discussion of the potential for nonresponse bias for the survey as a whole and for key survey variables. Where the potential of a nonresponse bias exists, efforts should be made to quantify the bias, if possible, within the existing project budget. If this is not possible, the likelihood and nature of any potential nonresponse bias must be discussed.

- GUIDELINES**
1. The nonresponse analyses conducted as part of routine survey analysis would be limited to using data collected as part of the normal conduct of the survey, and could include techniques such as comparison of the sample composition to the sample frame, comparison to external sources, comparison of “early” versus “late” responders, or observations made during data collection on the characteristics of nonresponders. The nonresponse analyses conducted for a particular survey would be tailored to the characteristics of that survey.
 2. Consider contracting additional data collection or analyses when the nonresponse analyses conducted as part of routine survey analysis suggest there may be value in getting additional information.

The following are additional notes on the Panel’s discussions with respect to the above standards and guidelines.

STANDARD

As part of its discussion of nonresponse analysis, the Panel considered the approach taken by the OMB, which essentially recommended that nonresponse bias analyses be conducted only if circumstances indicate a potential for bias to occur. For example, the OMB offers the following guideline: *Plan for a nonresponse bias analysis if the expected unit response rate is below 80%*. The Panel preferred that a nonresponse bias analysis always be conducted, for a few reasons.

- In practical terms, GOC telephone surveys very rarely have a response rate of 80% or higher, so the U.S. federal government’s OMB guideline means that a nonresponse bias analysis would be done for virtually all surveys.
- More fundamentally, it was felt there should always be some assessment of whether nonresponse bias might have affected survey results, regardless of response rate. Response rate is only an indicator of potential risk of nonresponse bias. Even high response rates can be associated with nonresponse bias, so it was judged prudent to always conduct a nonresponse bias analysis rather than making the analysis contingent on an imperfect risk indicator such as response rate.

As outlined in the next section on response rate targets, the Panel felt the appropriate point at which to consider response rate in relationship to the potential for nonresponse bias is at the survey planning stage, where consideration of response rate can be an effective part of managing the risk of nonresponse bias.

The suggested standard encompasses nonresponse bias analyses at both the unit and the item levels, with the item analyses focused on “key survey variables.” The Panel considered the OMB guideline for nonresponse bias analysis at the item level: *Plan for a nonresponse bias analysis if the expected item response rate is below 70% for any items used in the report.* The OMB item response rate criterion was considered to be too lenient, because it is relatively uncommon for survey variables in GOC telephone surveys have response rates below 70%. The Panel felt it prudent to always conduct a nonresponse bias analysis for key survey variables, because even high item response rates can potentially be associated with nonresponse bias.

The Panel’s intent is that the nonresponse analyses done as part of every telephone survey be the types of relatively low-cost analyses that can be done using information normally collected during the conduct of a telephone survey. Examples of such analyses are shown in Guideline #1. The assumption is that professional time for these analyses would be incorporated in the research firm’s proposal for the survey project, and therefore in the contract issued for the survey. It was suggested it would be useful for the project authority if the professional time allocated to nonresponse analyses be broken out in the proposal.

GUIDELINE #1

Some Panel members noted that nonresponse bias analysis is still an evolving field in terms of both techniques and empirical findings on relationships between response rate and risk of nonresponse bias in telephone public opinion surveys. In this context:

- The analyses mentioned in the guideline are not meant to be an exhaustive list
- It could be helpful for both research firms and people in the Government of Canada responsible for public opinion research to take a course in nonresponse bias analysis to learn more about both existing techniques and new techniques and empirical findings

GUIDELINE #2

The purpose of Guideline #2 is to recognize that there may be circumstances when a more intensive investigation of nonresponse bias is warranted, and which goes beyond the scope of what would be included in a typical contract for a telephone survey. An example would be a follow-up survey of nonresponders. The need for and potential value of any such “higher cost” procedures would be identified as part of the “lower cost” nonresponse analyses routinely conducted for each survey. If the latter does indicate a need for more intensive investigation, then there could be either a contract amendment or new contract issued to cover the cost.

RESPONSE RATE TARGETS

The issue considered here was what is required or desirable with respect to the response rates achieved in telephone surveys. Inasmuch as response rate is an indicator of potential risk of nonresponse bias, a response rate target can be useful when planning a survey as part of managing this risk. Setting a response rate target has concrete impact on various aspects of survey design and execution, such as number of call-back attempts, time in the field, and so forth.

The Panel recommended the following standards and guideline.

STANDARDS	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The telephone survey must be designed to achieve the highest practical rates of response, commensurate with the importance of survey uses, time constraints, respondent burden and data collection costs.2. Prior to finalization of the research design and cost for a particular telephone survey, a target response rate or response rate range must be agreed upon by the government department/agency and the research firm, consistent with response rate target Standard #1. The research will be designed and costed accordingly.
GUIDELINE	<p>Taking into consideration both the time available for fieldwork and the importance of the survey, consider using the following response rate target ranges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>10% to 20%: surveys for which only a short time period (less than three weeks) is available to conduct the fieldwork</i>• <i>20% to 40%: surveys of moderate to high importance that will be in the field for at least three weeks</i>• <i>40% to 60%: surveys of high importance, e.g., in terms of key policy decisions or resource allocation decisions</i>• <i>60% to 80%: Surveys with extraordinary response rate requirements and for which there are allowances for the time and budget required to achieve such high response rates</i>

The following are notes on the Panel’s discussions with respect to the above standards and guidelines.

STANDARD #1

The purpose of Standard #1 is to acknowledge the importance of response rate as an indicator of potential risk of nonresponse bias while at the same time requiring that response rate targets take into consideration the other survey characteristics listed, i.e., “the importance of survey uses, time constraints, respondent burden and data collection cost.” A balanced perspective on response rate was considered important because a relatively lower response rate may not in fact be associated with nonresponse bias, and undue focus on response rate at the survey planning stage could lead to inadequate attention to other aspects of the survey that affect data quality.

GUIDELINE

The purpose here was to provide realistic and appropriate numeric response rate target ranges as guidelines for use in planning public opinion telephone surveys.

While many aspects of survey design can impact response rate, the suggestion was to focus on two dimensions in particular when setting response rate targets for public opinion telephone surveys.

- **Time in field:** Some telephone surveys commissioned by the GOC have short time frames for the fieldwork. Examples include “overnight polls” on rapidly emerging issues, and omnibus surveys. These short time frames will result in lower response rates, and the suggested guideline was 10% to 20%. When for whatever reason the response rate target is required to be higher, there must also be ample time allowed to conduct the fieldwork. For example, for surveys of moderate to high importance the Panel suggested a response rate target range of 20% to 40%, but noted that this will probably require three weeks or more in the field.
- **Importance:** For surveys on topics judged to be of high importance, for example in terms of impact on key policy decisions or on decisions about resource allocation in the country, a risk management perspective may suggest aiming for a relatively higher response rate. For such surveys, it was suggested that a realistic albeit still challenging response rate target range would be 40% to 60%. Beyond this, there may be extraordinary circumstances that require an even higher response rate target, e.g., a longitudinal survey where it is vital to recontact as many of the original respondents as possible. In such circumstances a response rate target range of 60% to 80% may be appropriate, but to achieve this it may also be necessary to allow much longer time in field and allocate substantially more financial resources.

The numeric ranges suggested by the Panel were based on their experience and judgment. However, they strongly recommended that the Government of Canada conduct research to examine this issue further.

- It was strongly emphasized that any response rate numeric targets need to be grounded in actual experience conducting public opinion telephone surveys, in order to ensure that targets are practical and realistic. The Government of Canada’s own experiences with telephone surveys would be an important, ongoing source of information about response rate.
- The research should look at levels of response rate achieved and how response rate correlates with survey design characteristics. The research should also attempt to explore the extent to which nonresponse bias has affected public opinion survey results and how this might relate to response rate. It was noted the latter type of research would be facilitated if the GOC adopts the Panel recommendation that every survey include some analysis of the potential for nonresponse bias.
- Past MRIA studies of response rate have shown changes in response rate over time. In this context, the Panel strongly recommended that numeric response rate targets be periodically reviewed to ensure they remain realistic and appropriate.

STANDARD #2

Standard #2 ensures there will be some dialogue between the project authority and the research firm around response rate. This will:

- Ensure response rate is considered during the survey planning stage
- Ensure both parties have a shared expectation for the response rate target for the survey
- Enable the research firm to design, cost and conduct the survey accordingly

At minimum, the research firm should include response rate target assumptions in its proposal. Beyond this, the project authority may provide information in the Statement of Work such as a response rate target or response rate target range (e.g., using the numeric ranges in the proposed Guideline, or past experience), or information on relevant factors such as timing requirements or how the survey will be used and its importance.

With regard to the consequences of not meeting an agreed-upon response rate target or response rate target range, the Panel recommended the research firm should provide an analysis of why the target was not achieved. The Panel did not feel it appropriate to require the research firm to make additional attempts to achieve the target or to otherwise penalize the research firm, since there may be other factors outside the control of the research firm which impacted response rate or which were not known at the time the research was designed and costed.

MONITORING RESPONSE RATE DURING DATA COLLECTION

OVERVIEW

In the *Best Practices: Improving Respondent Cooperation for Telephone Surveys* report prepared by Phoenix Strategic Perspectives for PORD, there were a number of “best practices” noted for ways to improve response rates during data collection. The Panel was asked to consider whether the best practices related to the following should be adopted as standards or requirements by the Government of Canada:

- Monitoring *reasons* for nonresponse during data collection
- Monitoring *level* of nonresponse for different segments of the target population
- Attempting refusal conversions

The Panel was also asked to comment on whether a brief questionnaire should be administered to people who refuse an interview or terminate the interview in order to get more detailed information on why they are refusing to participate in the survey.

MONITORING NONRESPONSE DURING DATA COLLECTION

There was consensus among Panel members that there should be a *standard* associated with *monitoring reasons for nonresponse* during data collection, and a *guideline* related to *monitoring levels of nonreponse of different segments* during data collection.

With regard to the first issue, monitoring reasons for nonresponse during data collection, the Panel agreed that this requirement needs to be separate from the general standard for monitoring of fieldwork in

order to ensure that research firms clearly understand they are expected (a) to monitor the data collection process, *and* (b) to monitor the outcome of calls during data collection.

The Panel agreed to guidelines related to the types of circumstances where it may be possible or appropriate to monitor levels on nonresponse of different segments of the target population. Briefly, these are when one can (a) identify segments or variables to monitor, and (b) determine these are relevant to response rate.

For example, for a general population RDD sample:

- There are only a small number of variables available to define segments (e.g., age cannot be determined unless the interview was terminated after collection of age information)
- The available variables are related more to the sample frame itself (i.e., region, population density, etc.) rather than to the characteristics of the population that may drive nonresponse levels for a particular survey (e.g., attitudes held on the particular subject).

In comparison, if the sample source is a list, key variables or segments of the population may be more easily identified and tracked.

STANDARDS	Monitoring of call dispositions/reasons for nonresponse shall be carried out on an ongoing basis, throughout the entire field period.
	This information will be provided to the project authority upon request.
GUIDELINES	When key segments in the target population can be identified in the sample frame, monitor level of nonresponse by segments during data collection.
	When overall response rate is lower than expected, further analysis of the call disposition should be considered.

ATTEMPTING REFUSAL CONVERSIONS

There was agreement among the Panel that there may be some situations in which it can be appropriate to attempt to convert refusals into completed interviews in order to improve response rates. There was also general agreement that attempts at converting refusals should be done “cautiously” or only under “extraordinary circumstances.”

Many of the views expressed by the Panel are detailed in *Best Practices: Improving Respondent Cooperation for Telephone Surveys*:

Refusal conversions are an important and essential aspect of data collection for survey organizations. This practice involves an attempt to convert someone who has already said that he/she does not want to take part in a survey (or who terminated an interview) into a respondent. Done during a subsequent telephone call, converting refusals relies on senior, experienced interviewers calling back people who initially refused to be interviewed to try to persuade them to participate.

Use of refusal conversions should be handled with care, but this technique is effective in terms of increasing telephone survey response rates. Not only can it turn a refusal into a complete, another call to a household after an initial refusal might reach someone other than the person who refused, and result in a completed interview. Depending on the department and agency sponsoring the PORO survey (and the study topic), there may be heightened sensitivity around the practice of refusal conversions.

The Government of Canada does not want to be, or seen to be, pressuring Canadians to participate in telephone surveys. In these cases, the use of refusal conversions should be weighed against the potential for nonresponse bias should certain segments of the target population not respond to requests for an interview.

There was consensus among the Panel to adopt the following guidelines:

GUIDELINES FOR ATTEMPTING REFUSAL CONVERSIONS

If it is decided to attempt refusal conversions:

- Use only senior experienced interviewers to make conversion attempts
- Monitor the process to ensure that respondents are not reacting negatively to the additional contact
- Try to do enough conversions to allow a comparison of original respondents to converts on key study variable

GETTING MORE INFORMATION FROM PEOPLE ON WHY THEY ARE REFUSING TO FULLY PARTICIPATE IN A SURVEY

Panel members were asked to comment on whether the following should be a requirement for all GOC telephone surveys:

There are different types of “refusals” on studies, occurring at different stages of the interviewing process. The current practice for recording these “refusals” is to classify them into one of three categories:

Household refusal	Before a respondent is selected
Respondent refusal	Before answering all qualified questions
Qualified respondent break-off	Any termination after qualifying for the survey

To better understand the specific nature of refusals at each stage of the interview, one approach that the Government of Canada could take is to develop a very short standard questionnaire (i.e., one or two questions) for interviewers to record *more* detail about why people are refusing to fully participate than is shown above (e.g., the reason why a respondent is not willing to participate).

The idea would be that by looking at this type of detailed information during the data collection phase changes could be made to the questionnaire (e.g., the introduction, the order of questions) or the interviewing process.

The Panel generally agreed that in the form presented here, i.e., respondents being asked additional questions about their refusal, there are more downsides for the GOC than value to be gained. The fundamental objection, particularly among the GOC representatives, is that this may be viewed as “bordering on harassment” on the part of government and would likely reflect negatively on the GOC. In addition:

- Even if asking these additional questions is just perceived to be “irritating,” it was thought this type of requirement may adversely affect future response rates to surveys

- A point was also raised about the potential additional cost associated with requiring information of this type to be collected for all surveys when it may not always be warranted

It is also the case that some Panel members felt more detailed information about refusals could be useful but only if it did not involve needless questions to the public and/or increased the cost of conducting surveys. Directly pertinent to this point is how most research firms generally keep track of refusals, in the context of other information about the sample frame. As stated in the MRIA standards, members are required to maintain records of the disposition of the contact sample and these records must contain specific types of information. (Note: This information was also included in this report as one of the requirements for Survey Documentation.) The main categories stipulated by MRIA serve as input to generate the MRIA's Response Rate Calculation. However, record of contacts serve a number of other important roles in the execution of a survey, e.g., monitoring survey operations, evaluating the sample frame. Therefore, it is common practice in the industry to record the outcome of contact attempts in more detail than is required to generate response rate calculation, particularly as related to refusals.

An illustration of this is to compare the Response Rate Calculation category *Qualified respondent break-off* with the level of detail that some research firms will include on their record of contact about refusals, which are then aggregated into the overall category (i.e., *Qualified respondent break-off*) for the response rate calculation. Detailed records are kept about terminations including, (a) the stage or question number at which the respondent refused to continue, and (b) the reason for termination, either given by the respondent or in the interviewer's assessment of why the interview was terminated.

Arguably, this standard element of record keeping for any surveys provides types of information that are useful both during data collection (e.g., to make changes to the questionnaire or interviewing process) and after data collection, to help understand the nature of refusals for any survey.

Based on the foregoing, there was consensus among the Panel that:

- Neither a standard nor guidelines is required at this time.
- What may be more useful for the GOC as next steps would be to undertake a review of record of contacts for GOC surveys. The purpose of this review would be to identify what other categories could be added to a record of contact, if any, to better capture and characterize refusals on a survey but *without* either increasing interviewer burden or cost.

In the absence of a review of record of contacts, for the time being it was suggested it be left to the project authority and the research firm to customize the record of contacts for a survey, as appropriate.

STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR: Data Management and Processing

DATA ENTRY

There was consensus that a revised version of the ISO standards for *Data Entry* be adopted.

STANDARDS

6.2 Electronic data entry	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It shall be the responsibility of the research service provider to ensure that data entry or capture specifications for CATI are correct as specified and accurate, based on the client-approved questionnaire.• The research service provider shall establish and maintain procedures to test both the design and the implementation of the electronic forms of questionnaires. The type of tests and the persons involved shall be documented.• Upon request, the research firm will provide the project authority with the CATI version of the questionnaire.
6.3.1 Hard copy data entry	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Where logic data entry is used, the in-built checks shall be documented and tested prior to use. The nature of the tests used and the results obtained shall be documented. Irresolvable attempted entries (which are not accepted because of the in-built logic checks) shall be referred to the project manager/executive responsible for the project for a decision and resolution, with a record kept of any changes made to the data.• Unless otherwise specified where simple data entry is used, data shall be keyed in as recorded on the questionnaire. A record of any instructions shall be kept on file.
6.3.2 Data entry verification for paper documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The research firm shall document the level of verification to be carried out. A systematic method of verifying data entry shall be carried out on a project or stage/wave. The minimum total percentage verification per project shall be 10% of entries. Procedures shall ensure that there is a systematic method of verification of each operator's work and the verification shall be undertaken by a second person.• If an individual operator's work contains frequent errors, that individual's work (on the project) shall be 100% verified/re-worked. If necessary, appropriate retraining shall be given to that operator until error rates are acceptable. The effectiveness of the retraining shall be reviewed and documented.• The research service provider shall define the meaning of frequent errors and document that definition.

CODING

There was consensus that a revised version of the ISO standards and guidelines for coding be adopted.

STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

6.5.1 Use of Coding Software

- If automated coding software is used, the error rate should be estimated. If the error rate exceeds 5%, the research firm shall:
 - Inform the project authority
 - Revise the dictionary

6.5.2 Developing code frames

- The initial code list/frame shall be developed based on a systematic review of a minimum of 10% of open-ended responses and 50% of partial open-ended responses, where a frame does not already exist.
- The research service provider shall ensure that coders working on the project are provided with instructions and training that shall include, as a minimum:
 - An overview of the project
 - Identification of questions or variables to be coded
 - The minimum proportion or number of a sample (and its make-up) used to produce code frames
 - Where necessary or appropriate, specific subgroups required to develop code frames (e.g., by region, user or non-user)
 - Guidelines for the inclusion of codes in the code frame (e.g., decisions or rules regarding what should be included or excluded from a given code)
 - Any use to be made of code frames from a previous project or stage
 - Any other requirements or special instructions specific to the project

GUIDELINE:

- For some variables, the research service provider should use existing established classification standards, such as those for industry, occupation and education.

6.5.3 Code frame approval/coding procedures

- The research firm project manager responsible for the project shall approve the initial code frame prior to the commencement of coding and shall document it. This approval may involve the netting, abbreviating, rewording, recoding or deletion of codes.
- Also:
 - Where “don’t know” and “no answer” responses have been used, these shall be distinguishable from each other
 - The research service provider shall have clear rules or guidelines for the treatment of responses in “other” or catch-all categories; if the “other” or catch-all category exceeds 10% of responses to be coded, the responses should be reviewed with a view to reducing the size of the group.
- After initial code frame approval, when further codes become appropriate in the process of coding, all copies of the code frame shall be updated and any questionnaires already coded shall be amended accordingly.
- Upon request, the research firm shall provide the project authority with the initial code frame and any updated versions.
- The research firm shall provide the project authority the final version of the code frame.

6.5.7 Coding Verification

- The research service provider shall have defined procedures for the verification of the coding for each project, including documenting the verification approach to be used. Procedures shall ensure that there is a systematic method of verifying a minimum of 10% of questionnaires coded per project and the verification shall be undertaken by a second person.
- If a coder's work contains frequent errors, that coder's work (on the project) shall be 100% verified/re-worked. If necessary, appropriate retraining shall be given to that coder until error rates are acceptable. The effectiveness of the retraining shall be reviewed and documented.
- The research service provider shall define the meaning of frequent errors and document that definition.

GUIDELINES:

- There are two basic approaches to verification: dependent and independent. Dependent verification means that the second person has access to the original coding. Independent verification means that the second person does not have access to the original coding. In independent verification, the original coding and the verification coding are compared and if they differ, the correct code is decided by an adjudication process. Independent verification detects more errors than dependent verification. Independent coding verification should be used wherever possible.
- The final coded dataset should be reviewed, at least once, to ensure the internal consistency of the coding, and be corrected as necessary.

DATA EDITING/IMPUTATION

There was consensus that a revised version of the ISO standards for Data Editing/Imputation be adopted.

STANDARDS

6.6.1 Editing data/imputation

- An accurate record of any changes made to the original data set shall be kept. No data shall be assumed/imputed without the knowledge and approval of the research firm project manager. Comparison to the original data source shall be the first step in the process. Any imputation processes, including the logic of the imputation method(s) used shall be documented and available to the client on request. All edit specifications shall be documented.
- Where forced editing is used, the logic of the forcing shall be documented and test runs carried out, with the results documented to show that the forcing has the desired effect.
- Data editing/imputation should be used cautiously. The degree and impact of imputation should be considered when analyzing the data, as the imputation methods used may have a significant impact on distributions of data and the variance of estimates.
- The research firm shall include documentation of any imputation/forced editing, both in a technical appendix and in the final report.

6.6.2 Data editing of paper documents prior to data entry

- Where paper documents are hand edited prior to data entry, it shall be possible to distinguish the original answers of the respondent or interviewer from the codes or answers allocated by the person(s) carrying out the editing.
- When this type of editing is used, the logic and rules being applied shall be documented and any staff working on this element of the project shall be briefed as to the types of checks and corrections they may carry out.

STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR: Data Analysis/Reporting and Survey Documentation

DATA ANALYSIS/REPORTING

DATA ANALYSIS PLAN

The Panel was asked to comment on whether or not the following should be a standard or a guideline:

During data analysis, any changes to the data analysis plan should be submitted to the Project Authority for review.

There was no agreement reached: several members of the Panel preferred this to be a standard, one member felt it should be a guideline, and others did not have a strong opinion one way or the other.

DATA ANALYSIS VERIFICATION

There was consensus reached by Panel members to adopt a revised version of ISO standard 6.8 for Data Analysis Verification.

STANDARDS

6.8.2 Analysis records

- The research service provider shall keep accurate and descriptive records of the analysis process, to ensure that any analysis undertaken can be replicated at a later date.

6.8.3 Data analysis verification

- The research service provider shall have in place procedures to ensure the tabulations and other outputs have been checked.
- As a minimum, these checks shall verify:
 - Completeness, i.e., that all tables are present as specified, including the results of all reported significance tests
 - That abbreviations for headings or open-ended responses accurately reflect the full content
 - That the base for each table is correct against other tables or frequency counts
 - That the standard breaks/banner points are checked against source questions
 - That all derived data items are checked against their source
 - That the figures for subgroups and nets are correct
 - That there are no blank tables (i.e., with no data)
 - Weighting (e.g., by test tables)
 - Frequency counts prior to running tables, in order both to ensure the accuracy of data and to determine base sizes for subgroups
 - Spelling and legibility
 - That any statistical analysis used is appropriate and correct, both in its descriptive and inferential aspects
- For any subsequent outputs, appropriate checks shall be applied.

DELIVERY OF DATA TABLES

There was consensus among Panel members to adopt a revised version of the ISO standards for both *stand-alone hard or soft copy of data tables* and for *electronic data delivery*.

STANDARDS

6.8.4 Delivery of stand-alone hard or soft copy of data tables

- When data are reported to the client, such as in a stand-alone hard or soft copy of data tables, the following shall be taken into account, as appropriate:
 - Reference to the actual source question to which the data pertains
 - Inclusion of a description of any weighting method applied to the data
 - Clear identification of any subgroups used
 - Availability of the bases for each question, so that the number of respondents who have actually answered the question is identifiable
 - The number or proportion of respondents who replied “don't know” or gave “no answer”
 - Availability of both weighted and unweighted bases
 - Clear and complete definition and explanation of all variables used in the analysis of the data, including any significance testing, indexing, scoring, scaling and calculations of means, median, modes and standard deviations
 - The types of statistical tests being used and their level of precision
 - Information on cell suppression and other measures to assure confidentiality
 - Warnings on results which are unreliable due to very small sample sizes

6.9 Electronic data delivery

- The research service provider shall provide the project authority with a data file.
- For data delivered to the project authority in electronic format, the following shall be checked prior to data release:
 - Compatibility of the file format with the software specification agreed with the client (for Government of Canada, preferably SPSS version, Windows format per the PWGSC RFSO)
 - Completeness (i.e., the correct number of files and records are in each file)
 - Inclusion of all appropriate documentation to allow for replication of the data analysis and additional analyses, including where applicable
 - A structural description of the file
 - Labelling of the contents of the file, i.e., fully labelled variables and value labels
 - Identification and description of any computed or recoded variables, and instructions on limitations of use
 - Labelled weighting variables and a description of how these were applied
 - All personal identifiers per *PIPEDA* have been removed from the files
 - Encryption of files upon request
 - Presence of viruses in the file

INFERENCES AND COMPARISONS

There was consensus among the Panel to adopt a revised version of the OMB standard and guidelines for data comparisons and tests.

STANDARD	Research service providers must base statements of comparisons and other statistical conclusions derived from survey data on acceptable statistical practice.
GUIDELINES	Before including statements in information products that two characteristics being estimated differ in the actual population, make comparison tests between the two estimates, if either is constructed from a sample. Use methods for comparisons appropriate for the nature of the estimates. In most cases, this requires estimates of the standard error of the estimates and, if the estimates are not independent, an estimate of the covariance between the two estimates.
	Given a comparison that does not have a statistically significant difference, conclude that the data do not support a statement that they are different. If the estimates have apparent differences, but have large standard errors making the difference statistically insignificant, note this in the text or as a note with tables or graphs.
	Support statements about monotonic trends (strictly increasing or decreasing) in time series using appropriate tests. If extensive seasonality, irregularities, known special causes or variation in trends are present in the data, take those into account in the trend analysis.
	When performing comparison tests, report only the differences that are substantively meaningful, even if other differences are also statistically significant.

BACK-UP, RETENTION/SECURITY OF DATA

There was consensus by the Panel to adopt a revised version of ISO standards related to backing up, retaining and securing data. As will be noted, the agreed-to standards also make a reference to research firms being governed by the MRIA's professional codes as well as other legislation and other negotiated agreements related to data storage and retention.

An outstanding issue that MRIA has agreed to review and to discuss further with the Government of Canada relates to the discrepancy between the current MRIA standards for record retention and the requirements of some departments, based on these departments' interpretation of the *Privacy Act*. Specifically, some departments require all data either to be destroyed or sent to the department within 30 days of the close of the contract. MRIA states the following with respect to retention of survey materials.

Documents related either to the method of interviewing or specific documents arising from the project have fundamental security/retention policies by which MRIA members are governed.

The method used in a research project should be collectively administered to allow the study to be replicated. The required information is usually found in the Technical Appendix, along with any specific documents related to the study. A MRIA member company retains such files for a minimum of three years.

Specific documents, like completed questionnaires, the actual data in electronic format and tabulations produced from the same data also have similar retention policies. Questionnaires can be disposed of after 12 months from the end of the data collection. The actual tape/disk can be disposed of after 24 months from the delivery of the report.

Unless prior agreement has been reached with the client, these documents are the property of the MRIA member. Should the client wish to have such documents, the client is expected to pay reasonable costs of ensuring confidentiality (i.e., removing names and addresses from questionnaires).

Once this is resolved, changes may be required to the standard.

STANDARDS

6.10 Back-up, security/retention of data

- All data shall be held securely to prevent unwarranted access, damage or accidental loss.
- The research service provider shall ensure that all data are stored and retained in accordance with MRIA professional codes, the applicable law and legislative regulations, and any negotiated agreement with the project authority. (Note: It was suggested this point be amended to state the specific GOC requirements, once this is explored with MRIA.)
- Data pertaining to data processing and analysis may include, but is not limited to:
 - Raw data files
 - Other electronic files
 - Hard copy questionnaires and any materials/visual aids used by interviewers in the execution of interviews (e.g., cards, lists, FAQs)
 - Code frames
 - Project files including project management information
 - Emails and other correspondence
- The research service provider shall establish and maintain procedures to ensure that DP (data processing) computer files are clearly identified.
- Where data has been edited, cleaned, recoded or changed in any other way from the format, content and layout of its original format, the original data, final data and programme files, including all documentation related to changes to the data (as a minimum) shall be kept so that the final data set can be easily reconstructed.
- Extra analyses may be requested after the main processing and such analysis shall conform to the DP (data processing) requirements of this standard.
- For any proposed release of tables or data, procedures shall be in place to minimize the risk of disclosure of respondent identifiable information.

SURVEY DOCUMENTATION

There was consensus among the Panel members to adopt the following standards for survey documentation.

STANDARDS

Survey Documentation

In quantitative research the following minimum details shall be documented in the project report. These allow the reader to understand the way the research project was conducted and the implications of its results:

- The name of the client
- The name of the research service provider
- An executive summary of key results and conclusions, linked to the survey objectives, research questions
- Detailed description of background including at minimum:
 - Purpose, how the research will be used
 - Objectives, research questions
- Detailed description of methodology including:
 - The target group for the research project
 - The achieved sample size against projected sample size and reasons, if relevant, for not obtaining the projected sample
 - The date of fieldwork
 - The average interview length and the range
 - The sampling method, including the procedure for selecting respondents
 - The data collection method, and if applicable:
 - *The type and amount of incentives*
 - *The number of interviewers*
 - *The interviewer validation methods*
 - The call dispositions and response rate (in the case of probability samples) using the formula recommended by MRISA
 - State the level of precision, including the margin of error and confidence interval for the total sample and any key sub-groups (when probability samples are used)
 - Overview of the survey analytical plan
 - The weighting procedures, if applicable
 - The estimating and imputation procedures, if applicable
 - The results that are based on subgroups and the number of cases used in subgroup analysis
 - A brief summary of other quality controls and procedures used, including the results of each, which are to be detailed in the Technical Appendix
- Two separate appendices:
 - 1) *Study Materials*, containing the questionnaires, any visual aids, and other relevant data collection documents, in all languages in which the research was conducted
 - 2) *Technical Appendix*, containing:
 - Detailed call disposition record
 - A detailed description of the quality control procedures used and the results of each, measures/sources of sampling and non-sampling errors and, as appropriate any other information related to the quality of the survey

Following are a few comments about the standards.

- The required documentation includes discussion of quality controls, which could be quite extensive for some surveys. To balance the provision of detailed quality control information and report length, the standard differentiates what is required in the body of the survey report (i.e., a brief summary) and the level of detail that may be necessary to discuss all the steps taken and the results of all these procedures (i.e., a Technical Appendix.).

It was suggested that it may be necessary for PWGSC in consultation with the industry to develop a standardized reporting format for these quality controls for GOC telephone surveys:

- To ensure comparability of reporting across all surveys
 - To limit the burden put on research firms and the cost associated with these reporting requirements.
- This standard applies to custom surveys, data-only purchases and omnibus studies. However, most Panel members excluded syndicated studies from these standards on the basis that the intellectual property lies with the supplier and not the Government of Canada.

CONCLUSIONS

- The Advisory Panel's deliberations were concluded on December 21, 2006
- The Draft Report was provided to the Panel on January 2, 2007
- The Advisory Panel's comments were provided on the Draft Report on January 15, 2007
- The final report was submitted to PWGSC for consideration in the development of the 2007 POR procurement instruments on February 2, 2007.