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Evaluation of the Public Service Employee Survey

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Evaluation of the Public Service Employee Survey

July 19, 2017

Executive summary

The Public Service Employee Survey (PSES (Public Service Employee Survey)) has been conducted every three years since 1999. The Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (the Secretariat) managed four of these iterations, including the two latest cycles. The most recent iteration, with data collection in 2014 and the release of results in 2015, had 106 questions and was completed by 182,165 employees.

This evaluation of the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) examines the survey's relevance and performance, with input from the following:

- interviews with departmental and agency heads, Secretariat executives, and other stakeholders
- a survey of PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) primary users
- a review of PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) documents
- a trend analysis of PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) results
- an examination of public service employee surveys in other jurisdictions

Conclusions

The evidence shows the continuing need for the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) as a reliable and comprehensive tool to periodically collect opinions from public service employees about their jobs and their workplace. The PSES (Public

Service Employee Survey) addresses government priorities regarding its support for an effective public service, and administration of the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) fits within the Secretariat's mandate.

The PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) offers valuable insight into employees' opinions about their engagement on the job, the federal workforce and workplace, and leadership in the public service. It also helps identify concerns regarding these areas. However, more could be done to provide a deep understanding of the root causes of these concerns, in particular those related to leadership. Federal executives across the Government of Canada regularly use PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) results in their departmental and agency plans for improving people management practices. To a lesser extent, PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) results contribute to the Secretariat's development of the government's policies for people management.

While the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) has contributed to initiatives that aim to enhance public service employees' engagement and performance, there is limited evidence of government-wide responses to address issues identified in the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey). In parallel, while government-wide PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) results show positive change over time for some areas, there is also negative and little to no change over time in several others.

The areas of performance management, a respectful workplace and an ethical workplace have improved over time, while results for job satisfaction, satisfaction with organization, career development, and organizational performance have weakened over time. Little to no change has occurred in results on senior management, official languages, staffing and labour relations.

The PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) is effectively designed and administered, and there have been systematic efforts to continuously improve it.

Notwithstanding this, there are four significant concerns regarding the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) program:

1. the frequency of the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey)'s iterations

2. the time lag between fieldwork and the release of results
3. limitations in the analysis of PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) data
4. adequacy of government-wide support to address identified issues

Although determining the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey)'s cost-effectiveness was beyond the scope of this evaluation, interviewees indicated that the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) provides adequate value for money. Statistics Canada administers the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey), although there may be alternatives from suppliers in the private sector that are more economical.

Recommendations

1. The Secretariat should develop a strategy to proactively address government-wide issues highlighted in the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) results. Such a strategy should include the Secretariat:
 - playing a stronger leadership role in government-wide initiatives for change while respecting individual deputy head accountabilities
 - bringing greater consequences to departments and agencies regarding their PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) performance, depending on their level of improvement
 - taking specific actions to address those issues that could benefit from government-wide intervention.
2. The Secretariat should develop a plan to enhance the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) program that addresses the following:
 - providing timelier insights to departments and agencies on employee engagement, the workplace, the workforce and leadership issues
 - facilitating ongoing consultation with organizations and continual improvement of survey tools and products
 - enabling a wider range of analysis, including collecting additional targeted data
 - ensuring that the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) represents the state of the art in survey methodology and remains pertinent to key user

Introduction

The Public Service Employee Survey (PSES (Public Service Employee Survey)) has been conducted every three years since 1999. There have been six iterations of the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) to date.

As part of the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat's (the Secretariat's) five-year evaluation plan, it evaluated the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) over the summer and fall of 2016. This evaluation presents findings on the relevance and performance of the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) program and presents considerations for its future.

Although this evaluation examines the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) since its inception, it focuses particularly on how the 2014 iteration performed in its program design and short-term outcomes.¹

For a summary of the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey)'s background, including its governance, roles, process and resources, refer to Appendix A.

Purpose and logic model of the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey)

The expected **immediate outcome** of the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) is that insight is gained into employees' opinions on employee engagement, leadership, the workforce and the workplace, across the public service and at the level of departments and agencies.

The immediate outcome is expected to lead to the following **intermediate outcomes**:

- current and accurate information is available to inform people management policies across the public service
- plans are developed that address issues and opportunities identified by the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey)

Intermediate outcomes are expected to lead to the **long-term outcome** of improvements that lead to a high-performing and engaged public service that delivers on government priorities now and in the future.

The long-term outcome relates to the Secretariat's strategic outcome of "good governance and sound stewardship to enable efficient and effective service to Canadians." The causal relationships between these elements are presented in the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) logic model in Appendix B.

Evaluation of the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey)

This report is the first independent evaluation of the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey). Its purpose is to assess the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) program's performance and continued relevance, and to explore possible alternative approaches to its design and delivery.

Evaluation scope and questions

The evaluation examined the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) from its inception in 1999 to its most recent iteration in 2014. In its examination of program design, activities, outputs and immediate outcomes, the evaluation focused on the 2014 PSES (Public Service Employee Survey). Although the evaluation questions included relevance and performance considerations taken from Treasury Board guidance,² emphasis was on the program's performance and its design and delivery, with a view to suggesting improvements for future iterations. The complete list of evaluation questions appears in Appendix C.

Evaluation methodology

The evaluation is based on multiple sources of evidence:

- a review of 41 documents, including PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) foundational documents, a sample of departmental and agency Management

Accountability Framework reports, central agency reports, and PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) activity reports

- a trend analysis of PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) results
- an examination of public service employee surveys in Canada's provinces and territories, and in the US (United States), the UK (United Kingdom) and Australia
- interviews with 10 deputy heads, 10 Secretariat executives and 9 stakeholders
- a survey of 166 primary users of the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) (representing a 72.8% response rate)

The methodology is described in more detail in Appendix D.

Relevance

Conclusion: The evidence supports the continued need for the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) as a reliable and comprehensive tool to periodically collect opinions from public service employees about their jobs and their workplace. The PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) addresses government priorities regarding its support of an effective public service, and administration of the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) fits within the Secretariat's mandate.

Continued need for the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) program

To what extent is the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) aligned with current and emerging needs with respect to assessing the state of employee engagement, the workforce, the workplace and leadership?

Interviewees were virtually unanimous in stating that the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) fulfills a critical need to regularly assess employees' engagement and their views on key aspects of their jobs and their workplace. Interviewees spoke of assessing "the public service culture," the "mood" of the workforce and the level of "positivity," along with desired public service attributes such as inclusivity. Senior departmental and agency officials noted the need for survey findings to allow them

to compare their organization with others, and to measure their organization's progress over time. Union officials noted the need to support bargaining efforts, public awareness campaigns and dialogue with the employer.

Emerging needs include gaining a better understanding of employee morale, mental health and wellness, harassment, flexible work arrangements, LGBTQ (Lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual or queer)³ issues, and generational issues. Interviewees also spoke of the need to have a better understanding of the workforce's capacity to cope with downsizing and workload. Some of these issues are already being addressed in the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey); for example, seven new questions will be added to the 2017 PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) on mental health.

There were 90% of primary user survey respondents who reported undertaking additional survey activities in their organizations based on the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey). Such activities included internal follow-up surveys and focus groups, and other activities geared to better understanding PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) results (84% of respondents) and obtaining employee feedback on action plans (73% of respondents).

Although this evaluation's review of public service surveys in other jurisdictions was not exhaustive, it suggested that public service employee surveys are widely used. Of particular note was the finding that all of Canada's provinces and territories conduct public service employee surveys.

The PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) provides a valuable source of evidence for the Management Accountability Framework (MAF (Management Accountability Framework)). MAF (Management Accountability Framework) results reflect departmental and agency achievements and inform performance reviews of deputy heads. The Secretariat asks all departments and agencies to submit an organizational action plan based on their PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) results. According to Secretariat officials, MAF (Management Accountability Framework) assessments are to include references to the organization's self-assessment based on PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) results, along with

related plans, actions and results. Although most interviewees were familiar with these requirements, few indicated that the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) figured substantially in the MAF (Management Accountability Framework) exercise. Correspondingly, about one third of survey respondents found the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) useful in completing MAF (Management Accountability Framework) assessments. That said, people management is one of seven areas of management assessed by MAF (Management Accountability Framework).

Alignment with government priorities and Secretariat roles and responsibilities

To what extent does the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) program align with government priorities and with the Secretariat's roles and responsibilities?

A wide range of documentation, including reports from the offices of the Clerk of the Privy Council and the President of the Treasury Board, as well as ministerial mandate letters, indicate the need to promote effectiveness, productivity and well-being within the public service. Most recently, Budget 2016 included a commitment to strengthen the public service, ensuring that it remains innovative, agile and high-performing, and that it should develop its leaders and ensure that workplace improvements are based on evidence obtained through employee surveys.

Performance: progress toward outcomes

Conclusion: The PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) offers valuable insight into employees' opinions about their engagement on the job, the federal workforce and workplace, and leadership in the public service. It also helps identify concerns regarding these areas. However, more could be done to provide a deep understanding of these root causes, in particular those relating to leadership concerns. Federal executives across the Government of Canada regularly use PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) results in their departmental and agency plans for improving their people management practices. To a lesser extent, PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) results contribute to the Secretariat's development of the

government's policies for people management. While the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) has contributed to initiatives that aim to enhance public service employees' engagement and performance, there is limited evidence of government-wide responses to address issues identified in the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey). In parallel, while government-wide PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) results show positive change over time in some areas, there is also negative and little to no change over time in several areas.⁴ The areas of performance management, a respectful workplace and an ethical workplace have become more positive over time, while results for job satisfaction, satisfaction with organization, career development, and organizational performance have become less positive over time. Little to no change has occurred in results on senior management, official languages, staffing and labour relations.

Achievement of expected immediate outcomes

To what extent has the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) program contributed to increased insight into employees' opinions on employee engagement, leadership, the workforce and the workplace?

Interviewees were virtually unanimous in stating that the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) provided them with insight and understanding about employee engagement and workforce and workplace issues. Interviewees spoke of the following specific issues:

- work-life balance
- performance management
- career development
- empowerment
- communications
- employment equity
- telework and other flexible work arrangements
- harassment
- respect
- values and ethics

- discrimination

In all these areas, federal executives were able to identify areas of concern within their organization and within organizational units. They can compare their organization with others, and they can compare its current performance against its performance in previous years.

Interviewees were less positive about leadership, noting that the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) reveals insights about leadership that are less precise and actionable than insights in other areas. They acknowledged that other means such as the APEX (Association of Professional Executives of the Public Service)⁵ survey, which has a different focus than that of the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey), are used to gain insight.

In contrast, primary user survey respondents found the senior management leadership (73%) results to be most useful to their organizations. This suggests that while PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) results for leadership are valuable, there are expectations that more could be done to gather insight into this area.

In addition, interviewees noted that PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) findings are limited, as the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) can reveal concerns but offers little to help in understanding their root causes. While interviewees acknowledged that further analysis and group discussions in their respective departments or agencies are necessary to understand these issues, some suggested that more specific questions that delve into root causes could be used in a future PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) or interim survey.

Consistent with the analysis of interviewee comments, 74% of primary user survey respondents reported that the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) “contributed to providing insight into [my] department’s/agency’s employees’ opinions on employee engagement, leadership, the workforce and the workplace” to a “large extent” or a “very large extent.”

Other themes that survey respondents found to be most useful to their organizations are as follows:⁶

- respectful workplace (72%)
- leadership: supervisor (69%)
- harassment (67%)
- employee engagement (65%)
- ethical workplace (64%)
- discrimination (61%)

Primary users of PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) information mainly consult the publicly available PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) website for current and previous surveys' results. In terms of PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) products, between 72% and 86% of respondents reported finding useful ⁷ departmental and agency results by question or theme through the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) summary reports, the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) highlights reports, and results by organizational structure. There was less uptake for GCconnex, ⁸ with 31% of respondents finding it useful. ⁹ Of the respondents who engaged in cross-government discussions, most cited GCconnex as the forum that they used. In addition, 20% of respondents noted that the Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer (OCHRO (Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer)) should promote or improve the user experience on GCconnex to facilitate information sharing among departments and agencies.

Primary user survey respondents who participated in the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey)'s live presentation formats ¹⁰ found them to be 70% to 87% "useful to at least a moderate extent in understanding and/or addressing [their organization's] PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) results." While 31% to 48% of respondents did not use or did not know how useful they were, only 8% of survey respondents were unaware, which suggests that communication of these presentations was sufficient. PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) post-fieldwork information sessions provided to PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) contacts were the most highly regarded, with 87% finding this mechanism useful to at least a moderate extent. PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) pre-fieldwork presentations to the Human Resources Council ¹¹ were the second most highly regarded mechanism, at 78%.

Visits to the Secretariat's PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) web page ¹² indicate frequent usage of the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) reports posted there, but these statistics are not indicative of all usage since some departments and agencies post results on their own internal websites.

In all, 15 departments and agencies ordered customized reports ¹³ from Statistics Canada.

Achievement of expected intermediate outcomes

To what extent has the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) program contributed to: (a) department/agency plans developed to address issues and opportunities identified in the survey; and (b) changes to public service-wide people management policies?

Departmental and agency plans

Interviewees reported that PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) findings were a catalyst for planning, and most departments and agencies reported creating action plans. For example, in one department where there were concerns over information from senior management making its way to employees, "skip level" meetings were instituted to allow managers to be more attuned to what is happening at all levels. Other interviewees described the development of managerial practice guidelines that cover areas such as harassment, discrimination and inclusion, as well as taking steps to bring in guest speakers and arrange town hall discussions about employees' concerns.

Consistent with findings from the analysis of interviewee comments, 60% of primary user survey respondents reported that the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) contributed to their department or agency developing plans that address people management issues and opportunities. ¹⁴ In addition, 62% reported that the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) contributed to developing or modifying people management policies according to issues of concern. ¹⁵

Treasury Board policies for people management

Secretariat policy centre managers who were interviewed reported that the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) has not directly led to any changes in Treasury Board policies for people management. This observation is supported by the findings of this evaluation's document review, as no evidence was found of a policy modification based on PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) results. That said, interviewees noted that the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) revealed concerns regarding people management that provided key inputs into policy development. In addition to issuing policies, the Secretariat's people management policy centres issue a range of related policy instruments such as guidelines and best practices for people management, and PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) results could have a more immediate impact on these kinds of instruments, according to interviewees.

Achievement of expected long-term outcomes

To what extent has the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) program contributed to a high-performing and engaged public service?

Interviewees' opinions varied on whether the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) has contributed to improving public service employees' engagement and performance. On the one hand, interviewees assumed that the knowledge gained from PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) results, and the plans that resulted from this knowledge, would lead to improvements. On the other hand, little in the way of tangible proof of improvements could be identified, and even where improvements were noted, it is difficult to definitively attribute them to the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey).¹⁶

The perceptions of interviewees were supported by primary user survey respondents:

- 55%¹⁷ indicated that the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) contributed to "supporting improvements leading to an engaged workforce in [my] department/agency"
- 48% indicated that the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) contributed to "supporting improvements leading to a high-performing workforce in [my]

department/agency”

- 40% indicated that the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) contributed to “supporting improvements that lead to overall good governance and sound stewardship, enabling efficient and effective service to Canadians”

Notwithstanding these views, results that have improved are in the minority compared with those that have worsened or have had little change. Improvements of three or more percentage points from 2008 to 2014 at the government-wide level were noted for approximately 20% of the questions that span the three survey cycles, while approximately 40% of the same questions were less positive from 2008 to 2014 by three or more percentage points. That said, the government-wide level results may not show substantial changes that may occur in individual departments or agencies. The overall public service results are driven by six very large departments representing almost 50% of the population. In order to move the overall PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) results by more than a few percentage points, there needs to be a large shift in perceptions across very large to large organizations.

Comparisons between the 2014 results and the results for identical questions covered by the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) in 2008 and 2011 are available on the 2014 PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) website. Comparisons can no longer be made with survey years prior to 2008 since a methodological change precludes them from being comparable.¹⁸

Certain areas, specifically performance management, respectful workplace and ethical workplace, have improved over time. Upward trends¹⁹ are noted between 2008 and 2014 for the following specific questions:

- “I receive useful feedback from my immediate supervisor on my job performance”
- “My immediate supervisor keeps me informed about the issues affecting my work”
- “My immediate supervisor assesses my work against identified goals and objectives”

- “Overall, my department or agency treats me with respect”
- “I can complete my assigned workload during my regular working hours”
- “If I am faced with an ethical dilemma or a conflict between values in the workplace, I know where I can go for help in resolving the situation”

However, job satisfaction, satisfaction with the organization, career development, and organizational performance are areas that have been less positive over time. The following specific questions examined showed a declining trend over time: ²⁰

- “I feel I can claim overtime compensation (in money or in leave) for the overtime hours that I work”
- “Overall, I like my job”
- “Essential information flows effectively from senior management to staff”
- “My department or agency does a good job of supporting employee career development”
- “I believe I have opportunities for promotion within my department or agency, given my education, skills and experience”
- “I am satisfied with my department or agency”

The following job challenges show an increasing trend:

- “I feel that the quality of my work suffers because of too many approval stages”
- “I feel that the quality of my work suffers because of having to do the same or more work, but with fewer resources”

Additionally, little to no change has occurred in results on senior management, official languages, staffing and labour relations.

A workplace that is intolerant of harassment is viewed as a fundamental right, as identified in the Canadian Human Rights Act. ²¹ Most interviewees indicated that addressing harassment is a priority and that they had analyzed and taken actions in their departments to address the issue. Furthermore, PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) questions have been modified in recent cycles to delve into the sources of harassment. Yet government-wide PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) results for harassment continue to remain relatively unchanged, with 19% of employees who

indicated that they had been harassed. ²² In this evaluation's review of other jurisdictions, the results for the UK (United Kingdom) ²³ and for Australia, ²⁴ on harassment and bullying in the workplace, ²⁵ have also remained unchanged over several years despite their respective efforts.

More generally, the trends suggest that areas for improvement highlighted by the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) over the years may not have been consistently or sufficiently acted upon. In particular, the evidence suggests that although positive actions and results may have taken place within individual departments and agencies, there has not been a government-wide response to problems of a sufficient magnitude that would reverse some negative trends.

There is limited evidence of government-wide responses to address issues identified in the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey). While some interviewees questioned the need for more government-wide responses given their individual deputy head accountabilities, others suggested that OCHRO (Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer) could better support departments and agencies by facilitating the sharing of strategies and best practices, as well as helping to effect culture change.

Most interviewees focused on issues in their own departments or agencies and had limited interaction with other departments to discuss PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) results. Only 28% of primary user survey respondents indicated that OCHRO (Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer)-led cross-government discussions were sufficient.

Interviewees pointed to a level of cynicism about the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) that may be attributed, at least in part, to this finding. Perhaps most telling were responses to the statement "I believe senior management will try to resolve concerns raised in this survey"; only 43% to 44% of public service employees agreed during the last three survey cycles.

Performance: design and delivery

Conclusion: The PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) is effectively designed and delivered, and there have been systematic efforts to continuously improve it. Notwithstanding this, there are four significant concerns regarding the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) program:

1. the frequency of the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey)'s iterations
2. the time lag between fieldwork and the release of results
3. limitations in the analysis of PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) data
4. adequacy of government-wide support to address identified issues

To what extent is the design of the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) operating as intended? To what extent has the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) program identified program and survey tool improvements, including monitoring external best practices, to inform improvements?

Evidence from interviewees and survey respondents support the finding that the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey), as managed by OCHRO (Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer) and administered by Statistics Canada, is effectively run and is of a high standard. The 71.4% response rate is among the highest of the public service surveys of the jurisdictions examined. Interviewees perceive Statistics Canada as trustworthy. The PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) is offered in a wide range of alternative formats, and few other public service surveys can make this claim. Interviewees indicate that the timing of the fieldwork period is well chosen, allowing the inclusion of seasonal workers, avoiding summer holidays, and producing results in time for the MAF (Management Accountability Framework) exercise. Through the feedback that the Secretariat solicits from departments and agencies, the post-mortem exercise it conducts with Statistics Canada, and the contacts it maintains with public service survey managers in other jurisdictions, the Secretariat systematically identifies concerns and regularly improves the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) program and its survey tools.

What concerns are there about the design and delivery of the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey)?

The most commonly mentioned concern in the interviews was the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey)'s relative infrequency. Some see the three years between iterations as being too long and as providing inadequate feedback, reducing the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey)'s credibility. Every other jurisdiction reviewed for the evaluation conducted its survey either every two years (most provinces in Canada) or annually (the UK (United Kingdom), the US (United States) and Australia). However, 57% of survey respondents who had an opinion on this point ²⁶ reported that they did not want to see a change in the frequency of the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey). Of the 43% who did want to see the frequency changed, roughly two thirds indicated a preference for a survey every two years. Respondents in both groups mentioned an interest in interim surveys conducted annually that focus on particular aspects.

Some of these issues are already being addressed by the Secretariat, with work underway, to design a new shorter government-wide annual survey to complement the existing PSES (Public Service Employee Survey).

The second most commonly mentioned concern was about the time lag between the fieldwork period and the release of results. Most deputy heads, other interviewees and survey respondents saw a time lag of four to five months as problematic.

The sophistication of PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) data analysis was seen as inadequate. There are two aspects to this concern. First, the vast range of analysis possibilities offered by the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) appears to go largely unexploited. For example, interviewees mentioned the potential value of comparing scores for similar workers across similar departments (for example, technicians in science-focused departments). A useful analysis might involve examining responses of teleworkers in a particular branch and region within an organization, and comparing responses of men and women. These kinds of analyses, however, are rarely done because of the following reasons:

- departments and agencies do not necessarily have the required research and analytical capacity

- the process of requesting such analyses from Statistics Canada is seen as cumbersome and expensive
- access to the raw data for non-Statistics Canada personnel is limited to academic researchers and to departments and agencies on a limited basis and under controlled conditions

Second, because the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) tends not to include questions related to causal factors,²⁷ the only way to probe certain research questions more deeply is to collect more data. An example of such a research question is “What are the factors causing an unusually high number of employees in a particular branch and region to report that they plan to leave their jobs within the next two years?” Such data collection and research can be undertaken by departments and agencies only at their own expense. If follow-up research is to be conducted in departments and agencies, many follow-up questions of interest will go unanswered.

Some interviewees indicated that pre-survey consultations were not as comprehensive as some interviewees would have liked, saying that starting such consultations earlier would have been beneficial. In addition, the user-friendliness of PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) products was seen as somewhat lacking, with some suggestions made for using dashboards and infographics. Although it was acknowledged that the Secretariat is effective in modifying PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) content in line with current thinking, interviewees and survey respondents suggested that more could be done in this regard. Revised PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) content could examine the concerns of millennials, as well as more or different questions on the topics of civility, mental health, harassment, discrimination, innovation and flexible work arrangements. Accordingly, there is an appetite for greater government-wide support of more detailed analyses, strategies and tools that could facilitate departments and agencies to better understand their identified issues.

Performance: economy and efficiency

Conclusion: Although determining the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey)'s cost-effectiveness was beyond the scope of this evaluation, interviewees indicated that the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) provides adequate value for money. Statistics Canada administers the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey), although there may be alternatives from suppliers in the private sector that are more economical.

Is resource utilization at a reasonable level in relation to the production of PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) program outputs and outcomes?

It is difficult to empirically determine the cost-effectiveness of the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey). Direct expenditures associated with the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) are neither the highest nor the lowest on a per-respondent basis among the public service surveys examined among other jurisdictions. At approximately \$2.3 million, OCHRO (Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer)'s direct expenditures represent a small portion of the total cost of the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey).²⁸ Interviewees, however, assumed that OCHRO (Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer) worked to ensure that expenditures were economical, and indicated that it was important to conduct the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey), irrespective of its cost.

Are there more affordable alternatives to producing PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) outputs and outcomes?

Most jurisdictions examined used their own internal statistical agency to conduct their surveys. Some, however, contracted their surveys to private firms. In some of Canada's provinces, Ipsos, TalentMap and the Hay Group are used. The UK (United Kingdom) and Australia use ORC (Opinion Research Corporation) International.²⁹ ORC (Opinion Research Corporation)'s price of \$1,005,000³⁰ to the UK (United Kingdom) government was found to be the most economical among jurisdictions examined. In comparison, the Secretariat paid \$1,201,240 to Statistics Canada to administer the 2014 PSES (Public Service Employee Survey).

Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

The evidence shows the continuing need for the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) as a reliable and comprehensive tool to periodically determine opinions from public service employees about their jobs and their workplace. The PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) addresses government priorities regarding its support for an effective public service, and administration of the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) fits within the Secretariat's mandate.

The PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) offers valuable insight into employees' opinions about their engagement on the job, the federal workforce and workplace, and leadership in the public service. It also helps identify concerns regarding these areas. However, more could be done to provide a deep understanding of the root causes of these concerns, in particular those relating to leadership. Federal executives across the Government of Canada regularly use PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) results in their departmental and agency plans for improving their people management practices. To a lesser extent, PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) results contribute to the Secretariat's development of the government's overall tools for people management.

The PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) has contributed to initiatives that aim to enhance public service employees' engagement and performance. However, while government-wide PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) results show positive change over time for some areas, there is also negative and little to no change over time in several areas.

The areas of performance management, a respectful workplace and an ethical workplace have improved over time, while results for job satisfaction, satisfaction with organization, career development and organizational performance have weakened over time. Little to no change has occurred in results on senior management, official languages, staffing and labour relations.

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3. limitations in the analysis of PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) data
4. adequacy of government-wide support to address identified issues

Although determining the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey)'s cost-effectiveness was beyond the scope of this evaluation, interviewees indicated that the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) provides adequate value for money. Statistics Canada administers the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey), although there may be alternatives from suppliers in the private sector that are more economical.

Recommendations

1. The Secretariat should develop a strategy to proactively address government-wide issues highlighted in the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) results. Such a strategy should include the Secretariat:
 - playing a stronger leadership role in government-wide initiatives for change while respecting individual deputy head accountabilities
 - bringing greater consequences to departments and agencies regarding their PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) performance, depending on their level of improvement
 - taking specific actions to address those issues that could benefit from government-wide intervention
2. The Secretariat should develop a plan to enhance the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) program that addresses the following:
 - providing timelier insights to departments and agencies on employee engagement, the workplace, the workforce and leadership issues
 - facilitating ongoing consultation with organizations and continual improvement of survey tools and products

- enabling a wider range of analysis, including collecting additional targeted data
- ensuring that the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) represents the state of the art in survey methodology and remains pertinent to key user and stakeholder groups

Appendix A: the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) 1999 through 2014

The survey

The PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) gauges the opinions of Canadian federal public service employees about their jobs and their workplace. The PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) is administered online, with alternative formats available to accommodate employees with disabilities and employees without computer access. It is sent to employees of organizations in the core public administration and of participating separate agencies listed in Schedules I, IV and V of the Financial Administration Act. In 2014, the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) was launched on August 25 and included over 250,000 public service employees in 93 departments and agencies. Over the years, it has elicited a high response rate; in 2014, a total of 182,165 employees responded, representing 71.4% of the target population.

Modifications to the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) have been made with each iteration to improve it and to keep up to date on emerging issues. The 2014 PSES (Public Service Employee Survey)³¹ contained 106 questions on a wide range of issues, including public service employees' jobs, their organizations and how employees are managed, as well as demographic questions.

PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) results are made available to the federal public service and to the public through the Secretariat's website. Results are available at various levels, such as the public service as a whole, by organization, by units within organizations and by demographic characteristics such as age, gender, first official language, part-time work and full-time work.

The PSES (Public Service Employee Survey)'s governance, roles and process

The PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) was managed by the Secretariat in 1999 and 2002, the Canada Public Service Agency in 2005 and 2008, and the Secretariat's Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer (OCHRO (Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer)) in 2011 and 2014. OCHRO (Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer) is responsible for PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) planning, content, pre-survey consultations and report templates (75 templates were created for the 2014 PSES (Public Service Employee Survey)), and for presenting findings and other follow-up activities. OCHRO (Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer) stays abreast of best survey practices, including being a member of an interjurisdictional team with other public service survey counterparts in Canada and maintaining contact with counterparts elsewhere. OCHRO (Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer)'s work on the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) is supported by the Secretariat's internal Communications unit and its Web Services unit.

Since the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey)'s inception, Statistics Canada has carried out technical preparation and fieldwork under contract to the Secretariat. Statistics Canada is responsible for creating the sampling frame (gathering employee email addresses), determining organizational units in consultation with departments and agencies, focus group testing of new and revised questions, and administering the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey), including providing helpdesk support, developing the weighted dataset, and producing aggregated datasets and reports.

Responsibility for the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) rests with the Chief Human Resources Officer and the Assistant Deputy Minister, Governance Policy and Planning (GPP (Governance, Policy and Planning Sector)) Sector, of the Secretariat. The Secretariat's PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) team is led by the Director of Performance, Measurement and Monitoring, and is supported by the Director, Special Surveys Division of Statistics Canada. Guidance to the team is provided by a steering committee co-chaired by the Executive Director, Strategic Infrastructure and Information Management, OCHRO (Office of the Chief Human Resources

Officer), and the Director General, Health, Justice and Social Surveys, Statistics Canada. Overall governance is provided by a board that provides direction to the steering committee and that resolves issues that cannot be resolved at other levels of governance.

Pre-survey

In order to update PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) content, prior to the fieldwork for the 2014 PSES (Public Service Employee Survey), the Secretariat consulted internally with its policy centres, including those responsible for employment equity and diversity, values and ethics, and official languages. The Secretariat consulted externally with employment equity champions and chairpersons of committees, central agencies, departments and agencies, and bargaining agents. For the 2014 PSES (Public Service Employee Survey), departments and agencies were offered the opportunity to add up to five supplementary questions for their organizations; 12 organizations took advantage of this opportunity.

Over the history of the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey), the priorities of the Clerk of the Privy Council and the President of the Treasury Board have been taken into account. In addition, academic research has been consulted.³² Content changes for the 2014 PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) as a result of these efforts included the addition of questions on the duty to accommodate, types of harassment, and actions taken following experiences of harassment or discrimination. Questions were also added to explore performance management, given the launch of the Treasury Board's Directive on Performance Management in April 2014.

Post-survey

Following the administration of the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey), Statistics Canada processes data, populates reports and tables, and produces and disseminates aggregate datasets. Products for the 2014 PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) included the following:

- results tables for the overall public service and for departments and agencies, including breakdowns by demographic characteristics and breakdowns by organizational structure
- open datasets, which are results in a spreadsheet format to allow users to create their own tables ³³
- 2014 PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) Summary Reports for the overall public service and individual organizations
- Focus Series reports, which featured 14 short reports on various themes such as engagement and respect

Because PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) findings are publicly available, anyone inside or outside the public service can make use of them. However, the primary target audience of the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) comprises the following:

- departmental and agency deputy ministers and executives
- departmental and agency heads of human resources
- designated PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) champions and others who have assigned duties related to the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) (this group constitutes the Secretariat's "PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) contacts" list)
- heads of Treasury Board policy centres for people management

PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) products in 2014 were made available in two waves. On February 5, 2015, four months after the fieldwork closed, "top-line" ³⁴ results and results broken down by demographic characteristics for the overall public service and individual departments and agencies were released. On March 5, 2015, the remaining products were released, which included breakdowns by organizational unit. The release of PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) findings was accompanied by Secretariat presentations to departmental and agency heads of human resources and other audiences.

By request, and on a cost-recovery basis, Statistics Canada produces summary reports according to an organization’s specifications (for example, by sector or branch, occupational group, or employment equity group) and cross-tabulations of results (for example, by gender and age).

Following the release of PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) results, the Secretariat seeks feedback from departments and agencies about the survey process and products. Following the 2014 PSES (Public Service Employee Survey), 38 departments and agencies provided feedback on the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey)’s content and processes, including ideas for improvement. In cooperation with Statistics Canada, the Secretariat also conducts its own post-mortem analysis. Observations from these exercises are used to improve the next iteration of the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey).

Resources

The Secretariat’s work on the 2014 PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) began in December 2012 and continued until October 2015. Payments to Statistics Canada were made over three fiscal years, starting in the 2013 to 2014 fiscal year and ending in the 2015 to 2016 fiscal year. The Secretary’s Reserve Fund provided the funds for these payments. Table 1 shows total resources expended by the Secretariat on the 2014 PSES (Public Service Employee Survey). The total of \$2,338,022 does not include costs to departments and agencies, such as salaries and other costs.

Table 1: summary of expenditures for the 2014 PSES (Public Service Employee Survey)

	2012 to 2013	2013 to 2014	2014 to 2015	2015 to 2016	Total
Full-time full-year equivalents ³⁵	1.67	4.63	3.31	2.09	11.70
Salaries	\$162,470	\$464,910	\$317,652	\$191,750	\$1,136,782
Statistics Canada invoices		\$25,000	\$1,105,000	\$71,240	\$1,201,240

	2012 to 2013	2013 to 2014	2014 to 2015	2015 to 2016	Total
Total costs	\$162,470	\$489,910	\$1,422,652	\$262,990	\$2,338,022

Appendix B: PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) logic model

Logic Model for the Public Service Employee Survey Program

TBS strategic outcome

Good governance and sound stewardship to enable efficient and effective service to Canadians

Long-term outcome

Improvements lead to a high-performing and engaged public service that delivers on government priorities now and in the future

Intermediate outcomes

Current and accurate information available to inform people management policies across the public service

Plans developed that address issues and opportunities identified through employee surveys

Immediate outcomes

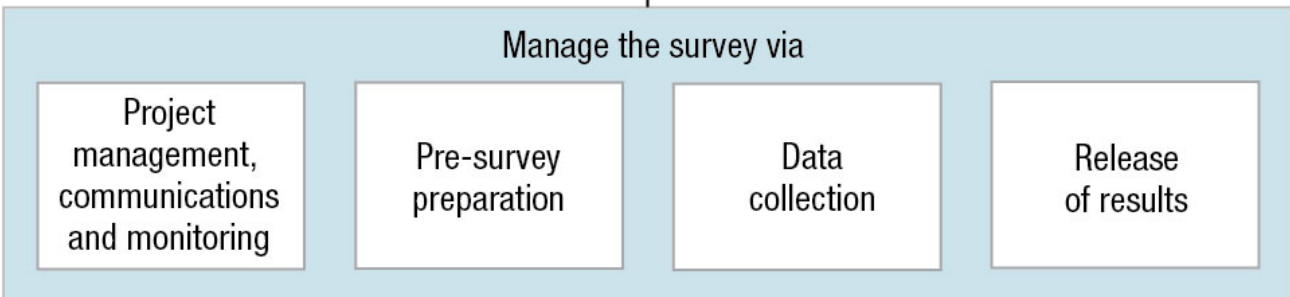
Insight into public service employees' opinions on employee engagement, leadership, the workforce and the workplace

Insight into departments' and agencies' opinions on employee engagement, leadership, the workforce and the workplace

Outputs

- Communication and information tools
- Letter of agreement
- Survey questionnaire
- Survey results from across the public service (reports)
- Department and agency survey results (reports)
- Research, analysis and advice
- Evaluation
- Post-mortem reviews
- Feedback sessions

Activities



The main components of the Public Service Employee Survey program are:

- activities
- outputs
- immediate outcomes
- intermediate outcomes
- long-term outcome
- TBS strategic outcome

The program's activities are to manage the survey via:

- project management, communications and monitoring
- pre-survey preparation
- data collection
- release of results

The program outputs are:

- communication and information tools, a letter of agreement and a survey questionnaire
- survey results from across the public service (reports); department and agency survey results (reports); and research, analysis and advice
- evaluation, post-mortem reviews and feedback sessions

The immediate program outcomes are:

- insight into public service employees' opinions on employee engagement, leadership, the workforce and the workplace
- insight into departments' and agencies' opinions on employee engagement, leadership, the workforce and the workplace

The intermediate program outcomes are:

- current and accurate information available to inform people management policies across the public service
- plans developed that address issues and opportunities identified through employee surveys

The long-term outcome of the program is that improvements lead to a high-performing and engaged public service that delivers on government priorities now and in the future.

The TBS strategic outcome is good governance and sound stewardship to enable efficient and effective service to Canadians.

Appendix C: evaluation issues, questions and indicators

Relevance

Issue 1: continued need for program

Assessment of the extent to which the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) program continues to address a demonstrable need and is responsive to the needs of Canadians

- To what extent is the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) meeting current and emerging needs with respect to assessing the state of the workforce, workplace and leadership?

Issue 2: alignment with government priorities

Assessment of the linkages between program objectives and (i) federal government priorities and (ii) departmental strategic outcomes

- To what extent does the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) program align with federal government and department/agency priorities?

Issue 3: alignment with federal roles and responsibilities

Assessment of the role and responsibilities of the federal government in delivering the program

- To what extent does the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) program align with the Secretariat's roles, responsibilities and priorities?

Performance (effectiveness, efficiency and economy)

Issue 4: achievement of expected outcomes

Assessment of progress toward expected outcomes (including immediate, intermediate and ultimate outcomes), with reference to performance targets and program reach, program design, including the linkage and contribution of outputs to outcomes:

- To what extent has the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) program contributed toward increased insight into public service employees' opinions on employee engagement, leadership, the workforce and the workplace?
- To what extent has the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) program contributed to progress toward increased insight into departmental and agency employees' opinions on employee engagement, leadership, the workforce and the workplace?
- To what extent has the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) program contributed toward current and accurate information available to inform people management policies across the public service?
- To what extent has the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) program contributed toward plans that are developed that address issues and opportunities identified through employee surveys?
- To what extent has the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) program contributed to improvements toward a high-performing and engaged public service that delivers on government priorities now and in the future?
- To what extent is the design of the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) operating as intended?
- To what extent has the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) program identified program and survey tool improvements, and associated plans and actions to improve the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey)?

- To what extent does the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) program monitor external best practices to inform PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) program strategies and tools?

Issue 5: demonstration of efficiency and economy

Assessment of resource utilization in relation to the production of outputs and progress toward expected outcomes

- Is resource utilization at a reasonable level in relation to the production of PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) program outputs and outcomes?
- Are there more affordable alternatives to producing PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) outputs and outcomes?

Appendix D: methodology

This evaluation of the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) program is based on several sources of evidence, as indicated in the following.

Review and analysis of documentation and administrative data

In order to understand the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) program's context, and to identify and analyze specific performance indicators, 41 documents were reviewed. These included the following:

- foundational documents such as the project charter and the letter of agreement with Statistics Canada
- a sample of departmental and agency Management Accountability Framework (MAF (Management Accountability Framework)) reports
- relevant central agency reports
- PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) activity reports

In addition, rudimentary trend analyses were undertaken using PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) results from 1999 onward. The 1999 to 2005 and 2008 to 2014 survey cycles were analyzed separately because the response scale changed from a four-point scale to a five-point scale starting in the 2008 survey cycle. Descriptions of

each label on the scale also changed. With these variables in play, while legitimate comparisons can be made between the 1999 to 2005 survey cycle results, and between the 2008 to 2014 survey cycle results, any comparisons between these two sets of results would not be methodologically sound.

Jurisdictional comparison

To provide additional context, and especially to determine best practices with a view to supporting suggestions for improvement, the public service surveys of all of Canada's provinces and territories, as well as the US (United States), the UK (United Kingdom) and Australia, were benchmarked. The benchmarking process included conducting a review of available documentation and interviews with survey officials from each jurisdiction.

Key informant interviews

Primary data pertaining mainly to performance questions were obtained through interviews with the following:

- 9 deputy heads of departments and agencies that participated in the 2014 PSES (Public Service Employee Survey)
- 1 representative of a non-participating agency
- 10 Secretariat executives
- 9 stakeholders representing Statistics Canada, central agencies, the Human Resources Council and bargaining agents

User survey

Primary data were also obtained more widely through a survey of departmental and agency officials who are responsible for the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) in their organizations. The Secretariat's PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) team provided the names and coordinates of key departmental and agency contacts to the evaluators. Online survey questionnaires that focused on performance, design, delivery and alternative questions were sent to 228 officials, with 166 responses received, representing a 72.8% response rate:

- 87% of respondents were either departmental or agency PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) champions (31%) or supported their organization's champion (56%)
- 46% were heads or managers of human resources functions
- 10% were deputy ministers
- 10% were assistant deputy ministers

Of participating departments and agencies, 83% are represented in the respondent sample.

Limitations

Although the methodology used was comprehensive and deemed to be adequate for the requirements of the evaluation, it had limitations. Other than the views of union representatives, employee perspectives are not represented in the study. Deputy heads of non-participating departments and agencies are represented only by an interviewee from one small agency. Jurisdictions approached were reluctant to release details on expenditures, and only three international jurisdictions were examined. Changes to response scales (described above) limited the trend analysis that could be performed on PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) historical results. To the extent possible, these limitations were mitigated by the use of evidence from other available sources.

Management Response and Action Plan

Evaluation of the Public Service Employee Survey

The Governance, Planning and Policy (GPP (Governance, Policy and Planning Sector)) Sector of the Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer (OCHRO (Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer)) has reviewed the evaluation of the 2014 Public Service Employee Survey (PSES (Public Service Employee Survey)) program.

Recommendation 1

The Secretariat should develop a strategy to proactively address government-wide issues highlighted in the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) results. Such a strategy should include the Secretariat:

- playing a stronger leadership role in government-wide initiatives for change while respecting individual deputy head accountabilities
- bringing greater consequences to departments and agencies regarding their PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) performance, depending on their level of improvement
- taking specific actions to address those issues that could benefit from government-wide intervention

OCHRO (Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer) fully agrees with the first two bullets of the recommendation. OCHRO (Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer) agrees in principle with the third bullet, although related activities are limited by TBS (Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat)' mandate.

Proposed action	Start date	Target completion date	Office of primary interest
<p>1. Develop an Enterprise-wide Survey Strategy that will provide a renewed delivery model, surveys content and ongoing governance. This will:</p>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establish a stronger leadership role for OCHRO (Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer), including acting as a hub for best practices and survey support for departments and agencies; • introduce broader and more systematic consultations with deputy heads and key stakeholders to reflect survey needs of Deputy Heads, as 	<p>January 2017</p>	<p>September 2017 (presentation to Public Service Management Advisory Committee for consideration)</p> <p>Full implementation in time to</p>	<p>GPP (Governance, Policy and Planning Sector)/OCHRO (Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer)</p>

Proposed action	Start date	Target completion date	Office of primary interest
<p>well as the priorities of the Government of Canada in relation to people management;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> inform the upcoming three-year cycle of the Management Accountability Framework and support annual Committee of Senior Officials (COSO (Committee of Senior Officials)) discussions to help ensure greater deputy head accountability; and introduce more frequent government-wide surveys (annual) than the traditional triennial PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) survey to ensure that ongoing workplace improvement is based on evidence through surveys, consistent with the Clerk's priorities and as noted in Budget 2016 (subject to identifying a source of funds). 		inform the 2018 annual survey cycle	

2. Take actions to better understand and address government-wide people management issues raised through the survey results to inform the development of government-wide people management action plans:

Proposed action	Start date	Target completion date	Office of primary interest
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> analyze survey results to identify if there are government-wide people management issues and examine underlying reasons and potential solutions; 	October 2017	January 2018	GPP (Governance, Policy and Planning Sector)/OCHRO (Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> engage stakeholders, such as the Privy Council Office, to facilitate the development of action plans to address government-wide people management issues; and 	July 2018	Ongoing	GPP (Governance, Policy and Planning Sector)/OCHRO (Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> identify appropriate leads for the development of initiatives to address specific government-wide people management issues, within OCHRO (Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer), TBS (Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat) or other organizations. 	January 2018	Ongoing	TBD

Proposed action	Start date	Target completion date	Office of primary interest
<p>3. Develop a tracking system whereby <u>OCHRO (Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer)</u> can track progress of actions taken by individual organizations to address issues raised by employee surveys:</p>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> highlight organizational-specific challenges to deputy heads, with the expectation that organizations will put measures in place to correct the issues and report back annually on progress; and 	September 2017	April 2018	<u>GPP (Governance, Policy and Planning Sector)/OCHRO (Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer)</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>OCHRO (Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer)</u> will monitor and assess progress annually (through the <u>PSEAS (Public Service Employee Annual Survey)</u> results and analysis), to be included in a report to the Clerk of the Privy Council and to coincide with the timing of <u>COSO (Committee of Senior Officials)</u> meetings. 	April 2018	Ongoing	<u>GPP (Governance, Policy and Planning Sector)/OCHRO (Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer)</u>

Recommendation 2

The Secretariat should develop a plan to enhance the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) program that addresses the following:

- providing timelier insights to departments and agencies on employee engagement, the workplace, the workforce and leadership issues

- facilitating ongoing consultation with organizations and continual improvement of survey tools and products
- enabling a wider range of analysis, including collecting additional targeted data
- ensuring that the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) represents the state of the art in survey methodology and remains pertinent to key user and stakeholder groups

GPP (Governance, Policy and Planning Sector) agrees with all aspects of recommendation 2.

Proposed action	Start date	Target completion date	Office of primary interest
4. Provide deputy heads with timely <u>PSEAS (Public Service Employee Annual Survey)</u> results on key people management issues for the overall public service and their own organization.	Results: June 2017	Ongoing	Deputy heads

Proposed action	Start date	Target completion date	Office of primary interest
<p>5. As part of the Enterprise-wide Survey Strategy, <u>OCHRO (Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer)</u> will examine different business models for administering public service employee surveys that will make it possible to provide the results sooner. One model is already being tested. In February 2017, <u>OCHRO (Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer)</u>, working with a private sector service provider, launched the first Public Service Employee Annual Survey. This model will inform options for a new business model in the future.</p>	February 2017	Summer 2017	<p><u>GPP (Governance, Policy and Planning Sector)/OCHRO (Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer)</u></p>

Proposed action	Start date	Target completion date	Office of primary interest
<p>6. As part of its Enterprise-wide Survey Strategy, <u>OCHRO (Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer)</u> will establish a more systematic approach to consultations with key stakeholders, departments and agencies, including the Human Resources Council, the Public Service Management Advisory Committee, the bargaining agents, etc., to ensure that key indicators and intelligence resulting from the surveys remain relevant, support deputy heads in their people management responsibilities, and meet government wide people management priorities. This will include the establishment of an interdepartmental working group that will inform the continual improvement of survey tools and products.</p>	Spring 2017	Ongoing	<p><u>GPP (Governance, Policy and Planning Sector)/OCHRO (Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer)</u></p>
<p>7. Ensure that <u>OCHRO (Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer)</u> and departments have access to a wider range of analysis by, for example, collecting additional targeted data. The following actions have been taken already:</p>			

Proposed action	Start date	Target completion date	Office of primary interest
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure more sophisticated and in-depth analysis of the micro data, <u>OCHRO (Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer)</u> negotiated with Statistics Canada for broader access to the micro-data from the upcoming 2017 triennial Public Service Employee Survey (which was limited before). This improved access available at Statistics Canada's data research centres will enable <u>GPP (Governance, Policy and Planning Sector)</u> to develop overall indices, to refine and update the employee engagement model, and to uncover patterns of responses in various employee groups. Organizations will then better understand their results and be able to develop more focussed action plans to address issues raised in the survey; and • For the 2017 <u>PSEAS (Public Service Employee Annual Survey)</u>, the contract with the service provider includes provisions for giving <u>OCHRO (Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer)</u>'s team of survey analysts full control of the micro-data. 	June 2017	Ongoing	<u>GPP (Governance, Policy and Planning Sector)/OCHRO (Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer)</u> Departments and agencies

Proposed action	Start date	Target completion date	Office of primary interest
<p>8. OCHRO (Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer) will continue to work on improving methodology and benchmarking with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s (OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development)’s) Public Employment Management Working Group and Civil Service Effectiveness Project and with provincial and territorial governments, through the Interjurisdictional Engagement and Analytics Team, to align survey strategies to facilitate comparative analysis across jurisdictions. This work will also strengthen OCHRO (Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer)’s role as a hub for best practices in survey design and analysis (e.g., methodology, content, processes and procedures):</p>	<p>Spring 2017 and ongoing</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>GPP (Governance, Policy and Planning Sector)/OCHRO (Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly meetings of the Interjurisdictional Engagement and Analytics working group; and • Ongoing consultations with OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) Public Employment Management Working Group, including in person meetings once a year. 			

Footnotes

- 1 The 2014 PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) is the most recent survey and is considered by the Secretariat to be an evolution of past surveys, with the Secretariat having applied lessons learned regarding its processes and modifying some of its questions to reflect the current environment.
- 2 Treasury Board Policy on Results and the Treasury Board Directive on Results.
- 3 LGTBO (Lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual or queer) refers to those who identify as lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual or queer.
- 4 Analysis is based on questions included in the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) over the last three survey cycles (2008, 2011 and 2014).
- 5 The Association of Professional Executives of the Public Service of Canada conducts the Executive Work and Health Survey once every five years. The APEX (Association of Professional Executives of the Public Service) survey differs from the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) in that the APEX (Association of Professional Executives of the Public Service) surveys only executives.
- 6 Percentages provided are of respondents reporting having gained insight to a "large extent" or a "very large extent."
- 7 Percentage of respondents who found the product useful to a "large extent" or a "very large extent".
- 8 GCconnex is a communication and repository tool implemented with the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey)'s 2014 iteration for PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) contacts and other interested parties across government.
- 9 Percentage of respondents who found the product useful to a "large extent" or a "very large extent".

- 10 PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) presentations before and following PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) fieldwork to the Human Resources Council, the Human Resources Council's PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) working group meetings, PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) information sessions to PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) contacts, and "Open Space" sessions for PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) contacts.
- 11 The Human Resources Council comprises all heads of human resources units from the core public administration, separate agencies and crown corporations. Its mandate includes supporting innovation in the delivery of and support to people management in the public service.
- 12 During 2015, there were 31,606 page views of the Secretariat's PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) web pages. The average time spent on each web page was 69 seconds.
- 13 These departments and agencies ordered a total of 390 customized reports.
- 14 Percentage of respondents who found the contribution was to a "large extent" or a "very large extent".
- 15 Percentage of respondents who found the contribution was to a "large extent" or a "very large extent".
- 16 It was also acknowledged by interviewees that a wide range of factors influences public service employees' engagement and performance, despite the best efforts of organizations to implement action plans to improve results (for example, the political environment and major events beyond the control of the public service). Accordingly, there was no consensus about the extent to which PSES (Public Service Employee Survey)-driven activities could be expected to influence such broad outcomes.

- 17 Percentage responding "to a large extent" or "to a very large extent".
- 18 The response scale changed from a four-point scale to a five-point scale starting in the 2008 survey cycle. Descriptions of each label on the scale also changed. With these variables in play, while legitimate comparisons can be made between the 1999 to 2005 survey cycle results, and between the 2008 to 2014 survey cycle results, any comparisons between these two sets of results would not be methodologically sound.
- 19 A trend, for the purpose of this analysis, is defined as a continuous increase (upward trend) or decrease (downward trend) of 4% or more over 2 or more consecutive PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) cycles.
- 20 It is acknowledged that long-term trends are affected by a wide array of factors, some of which are beyond the control of leaders in the public service. The trends found in analyzing PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) results over time cannot with certainty be attributed to actions taken or not taken in response to the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey).
- 21 Policy on Harassment Prevention and Resolution.
- 22 The PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) questions on harassment were modified in 2008 and again in 2014, which makes it impossible to compare the results against past years. However, when comparing between years when the question wording was identical (2008 and 2011), the results were unchanged.
- 23 Between 2009 and 2016, the UK (United Kingdom) result for those who responded yes to "During the past 12 months have you personally experienced bullying or harassment at work?" has been between 10% and 11%. Source: Gov.UK (United Kingdom) Civil Service People Surveys.

- 24 Between 2011 and 2016, the Australian result for those who responded yes to "During the last twelve months, have you been subjected to harassment or bullying in your workplace?" has been between 16% and 17%. Source: Australian Public Service Commission Annual Reports.
- 25 Australia and the UK (United Kingdom) use one-year time frames, whereas the PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) uses a two-year time frame, making it more likely that an employee could indicate having been the victim of harassment. Therefore, rates of perceived harassment provided above should not be directly compared.
- 26 That is, those not answering "don't know".
- 27 In other jurisdictions, such as British Columbia and Nova Scotia, the academic literature is examined to identify theoretical relationships between possible root causes and workplace concerns such as harassment. This work leads to the inclusion of related questions in the survey questionnaire, which allows for more in-depth analysis once data have been collected.
- 28 Considerably higher costs would be associated with the time spent by employees and managers across the public service in completing the online questionnaire and follow-up activities.
- 29 Formerly known as Opinion Research Corporation.
- 30 Based on the average conversion rate to Canadian dollars in 2015.
- 31 2014 Public Service Employee Survey.
- 32 For example, for the 2008 PSES (Public Service Employee Survey), academic research on employee engagement was used to develop new questions.

- 33 Under the Statistics Act, Statistics Canada must protect the confidentiality of PSES (Public Service Employee Survey) responses. Only results at aggregated levels are published or shared in datasets. In addition, aggregated data are suppressed for groups that have low respondent counts. Raw data are not released, although they are made available to academic researchers and to departments and agencies on a limited basis and under controlled conditions.
- 34 The "top line" refers to how all the respondents answer the questions.
- 35 A full-time full-year equivalent unit represents a full-time employee working for the whole year.
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2017-09-15