

OMB Control No. # 693-0031 – NIST Generic Request for Customer Service-Related Data Collections

NVLAP ACCREDITATION SERVICES CUSTOMER SURVEY

FOUR STANDARD SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. Explain who will be surveyed and why the group is appropriate to survey.

The National Voluntary Laboratory Accreditation Program (NVLAP) accredits testing and calibration laboratories that comply with the NVLAP Procedures and General Requirements (15 CFR 285). Each laboratory that has been granted accreditation (both first-time and renewing laboratories) is surveyed when the evaluation process has been completed and the certificate of accreditation is mailed. The survey assesses the satisfaction of this group with the accreditation services provided by NVLAP. The information collected from NVLAP-accredited laboratories assists NVLAP with identifying changes needed to better meet the current and future needs of its customers. The survey responses are used as a metric to measure NVLAP's success in meeting its fourth objective for quality; i.e., *to communicate frequently with customers and stakeholders to determine their accreditation needs and requirements.*

2. Explain how the survey was developed including consultation with interested parties, pre-testing, and responses to suggestions for improvement.

Questions for this survey were developed based upon several sources: a previous version of a NVLAP customer satisfaction survey, a survey design template created for NIST Technology Services, and a customer satisfaction "report card" instrument, developed by NIST on the basis of similar instruments used by a Baldrige National Quality Award winner. The blend of these time-tested formats should improve the quality, completeness, consistency and actionability of the customer survey data collected by NVLAP. The inclusion of standard questions facilitates the channeling of data upwards to monitor organizational performance at higher levels or for benchmarking purposes.

3. Explain how the survey will be conducted, how customers will be sampled if fewer than all customers will be surveyed, expected response rate, and actions your agency plans to take to improve the response rate.

All NVLAP-accredited laboratories are surveyed at the time of initial accreditation and annually thereafter at renewal time (once a year); therefore, there is no sampling. The survey form is included in the accreditation documents package (certificate and scope of accreditation), which is mailed via first-class mail to each accredited laboratory. It is believed that enclosing the survey with the accreditation documents draws the laboratory's attention to the survey form

because the certificate and scope are highly valued — tangible symbols of the laboratory's NVLAP-accredited status — and the package will be opened and reviewed.

The response rate has historically been in the range of 15% - 25%. Actions that NVLAP will take to improve the response rate include: 1) summarizing and sharing survey results and how NVLAP uses those results in NVLAP's electronically distributed newsletter, 2) publishing this information on NVLAP's external website, and 3) exploring electronic alternatives for submitting the responses to NVLAP.

4. Describe how the results of the survey will be analyzed and used to generalize the results to the entire customer population.

Results are used to identify opportunities for improvement and preventive action in the steps leading to granting accreditation to a laboratory. If a survey is returned with a rating of "1" (Did not meet expectations) or "2" (Met some expectations), it is routed to the Chief of NVLAP, who either personally contacts the respondent or assigns a Program Manager to make the contact.

Responses are summarized by question number and fiscal year quarter. Simple statistical techniques, such as frequency distributions, are employed and comments are screened for recurring themes and key words (i.e., text analysis). The results are reviewed by the NVLAP Management Committee on a regular basis as part of NVLAP's management review process (an integral part of its quality management system). Because the survey design will remain the same over time, changes in levels of satisfaction can be measured over time in response to management decisions.