

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 provided. 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 originally created for the NIST Technology Services operating unit (since restructured), 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 has improved the quality, completeness, consistency and actionability of the customer survey data collected by NVLAP. The inclusion of standard questions has facilitated 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 currently included in the accreditation documents package (certificate and scope of accreditation), which is emailed to each accredited laboratory. It is believed that providing 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.

In FY15 NVLAP launched a redesigned information system. As development of the system continues, this collection instrument will be incorporated into the customer portal, which accredited laboratories will use to electronically submit their responses to the survey. NVLAP anticipates that once incorporated this feature will boost the response rate, which historically has been in the range of 15% - 25%. Other actions that NVLAP will take to improve the response rate include summarizing and sharing survey results and how NVLAP uses those results in NVLAP's electronically distributed newsletter.

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 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 NVLAP chief, 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 summaries are reviewed annually as part of NVLAP's management review process—an integral part of its quality management system. Because the survey design has remained consistent over time, changes in levels of satisfaction can be easily measured in response to management decisions.