CHAPTER 9

CASE STUDY 9.3 HRMIS CASE STUDY: EMPLOYEE VIEWPOINT SURVEY ANALYSIS AND RESULTS TOOL (UNITED STATES)

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SUMMARY

In 2015, the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK), within the National Institutes of Health (NIH), developed the Employee Viewpoint Survey Analysis and Results Tool (EVS ART) to extract insights from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS). The solution relied on the creative use of worksheet software to extract and transform data to produce dashboards automatically from a single data file. Effectively, the worksheet developed by the NIDDK team integrated a data infrastructure and a dashboard into a single platform, reducing implementation costs. The tool provides valuable information for senior leadership to promote employee engagement and guide policy making.

INTRODUCTION

It is a leader's responsibility to care for the people in an organization and to create and sustain a culture where employees can flourish—one in which performance is central and employee engagement is maintained. To be successful, these values must be integrated into the function and mission of the organization, not treated as distinct or separate. To create this type of culture, leadership must secure buy-in from staff at all levels. Staff must embrace the organization's vision and emulate its core values.

It is important that the core values not just be lofty or aspirational goals but translate into action on the frontlines, where the people of the organization are doing the work. Values can and should be measured through employee engagement surveys. This measurement allows leaders to keep a finger on the organization's pulse. It is important to combine data analytics with the voices of employees to inform strategies and resource allocation and to verify whether actions are paying off. Employee feedback must inform and orient action, whether in the form of focus groups, town halls, stay or exit interviews, or crowdsourcing.

This case study describes how the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK) developed an analytics dashboard to measure and promote employee engagement. The project was named the Employee Viewpoint Survey Analysis and Results Tool (EVS ART). EVS ART provided NIDDK leadership with immediate and informative data analytics on their employees' perceptions of whether, and to what extent, conditions characterizing a successful organization were present in their agencies. Using EVS ART, the NIDDK was able to transform the enormous amount of data provided by the United States Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) into a user-friendly format in mere minutes. The survey topics, in response to which employees candidly shared their perceptions about their work experience, organization, and leaders, covered employee engagement, employee satisfaction,

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and several submeasures, including policies and practices, rewards and recognition, opportunities for professional development, and diversity and inclusion—all of which were used to inform decision-making.

EVS ART is an example of human resources management information system (HRMIS) analytics, similar in purpose to the case study of Luxembourg (case study 9.1). However, in contrast to Luxembourg, which generated analytical insights on the entirety of its HRMIS, this case focuses on the employee engagement module within an HRMIS. This module is diverse and expansive as a result of the rich data provided by the FEVS. The FEVS measures employees' perceptions of whether, and to what extent, conditions characteristic of successful organizations are present in their agencies. It is a survey in which employees can candidly share their perceptions about their work experiences, organizations, and leaders. EVS ART therefore includes indicators on employee satisfaction, global satisfaction, compensation, and organization, as well as more customized questions about remote work and COVID-19. The focus on improving a particular module of an HRMIS makes this case similar to the approach in Brazil (case study 9.2), which reformed how the payroll module operated.

The project provided a set of lessons that may be helpful for practitioners. First, keep the solution simple. While the inner workings of a tool itself may venture over to the complex side, do not make the act of engaging with the analysis complex for the user. Second, make the solution accessible to all types of users. This means two things. One, ensure that the tool is accessible to those with disabilities, and two, make the tool available to the broadest audience possible. If people do not know about the tool, they will continue to spend unnecessary time recreating analyses and will not obtain insights from the data. Finally, remember that transparency ensures that data analytics can be trusted by those it benefits. When working with data, leadership should not shy away from difficult conversations, because survey takers already know whether something is working well or not. It is incumbent on leadership to be honest, dig deeper, and let staff know that their input will drive organizational change.

This case study is structured as follows. We first describe the institutional context, with particular attention to the FEVS, the largest civil servant engagement survey in the United States. Section 2 explains the initial rollout of the solution. Section 3 provides a detailed overview of the solution. Section 4 outlines the lessons learned during the implementation of the project. Section 5 describes the impact of the solution. Section 6 reflects critically on the importance of looking beyond analytics and effectively promoting change. Section 7 reviews challenges faced and future improvements to EVS ART. Finally, we conclude.

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT: THE FEVS

Each year, the OPM administers the FEVS to over 1.4 million full- and part-time permanent, nonseasonal employees governmentwide.[9] The FEVS measures employee engagement, including employees' perceptions of whether, and to what extent, conditions characterizing successful organizations are present in their agencies. It therefore provides valuable insight into agencies' strengths and opportunities for improvement. In 2020, 44.3 percent (624,800) of those receiving the FEVS completed it—each spending, on average, 25 minutes to do so (OPM 2021). This translates to over 260,000 federal hours and equates to over US$10 million worth of staff time taking the survey.[10]

The FEVS provides valuable information because the OPM proactively designed the FEVS to include multiple index measures and key categories, such as employee engagement and satisfaction, to help agencies identify important patterns and themes.[11] Each index is valuable, aggregating multiple answers.[12] While much can be learned from the index measures and key categories, on average, there is a three- to four-month period during which the OPM processes the raw data before distributing it to agencies.

The FEVS allows agencies to obtain valuable feedback from all levels of the organization. Subgroups within an agency that have 10 or more survey participants can receive their own area-specific results, and those with fewer than 10 participants roll up to the next level of report to ensure at least 10 responses. This protects the confidentiality of the survey respondent, which is crucial when the goal is to obtain honest

feedback (NIH 2018). In 2018, over 28,000 organizations within the federal government had 10 or more survey participants, for a total of over 280,000 survey respondents—and the number continues to grow (Kamensky 2019).

The FEVS's granular and large-scale data allow organizational leaders within the federal government to tap into the perspective of those on the frontlines and learn from the voices of employees. In turn, the same information can be used to design employee-informed programs and initiatives. It is important for staff to be made aware of changes informed by their feedback. Informed change is noticed, creates ownership, and leads to increased engagement—and engagement is the foundation on which successful missions are built.

Despite this valuable information, extracting insights from the FEVS and putting them into action is challenging. Once given access to the survey, government agencies spend weeks culling large amounts of data to operationalize the survey's feedback. This effort is extremely labor intensive, time-consuming, and costly. Some agencies spend thousands of dollars on manpower or on procuring outside support to analyze the data. In addition, by the time the results are received and the analysis completed, agencies are often on the heels of the next survey—with little time to act on the feedback provided. It is difficult to launch meaningful initiatives with old data, and the lack of timely action, or perceived inaction, often leaves employees wondering whether taking the survey is of value.

INITIAL ROLLOUT

A small team at the NIDDK, within the National Institutes of Health (NIH), took it upon themselves to work with the data and create a framework to deliver results quickly, accurately, and intuitively. The NIDDK's senior leaders appreciated the importance of these data and made it the highest priority to construct a way to translate them. They fully supported the NIDDK team's efforts—giving them time, flexibility, and necessary resources.

The NIDDK team set out to design a tool that brought to life the voice of the people, one that was unlike other tools. As analysts, they wanted to ensure that users could arrive at actionable data quickly. However, they approached it differently from a traditional report. It was important that the tool was easy to look at, that the flow of information made sense, and that it told a story. They also wanted to ensure that actionable target areas—and themes—jumped out at the user. It was of great importance that the tool be both easy to use and accessible to all federal employees.

The team worked for two years to create a tool that would enable leaders to drill down and compare data, have a better pulse on engagement levels, and view FEVS scores in an actionable and targeted way. They began by utilizing a resource that they already had at their fingertips, a common program used across the federal government: Microsoft Excel. The team worked to design an easy-to-use template that provided a report with an easy-to-understand flow, and they ensured that the templates were password protected so that links could not be broken and results would not be compromised. The team also worked to ensure that the tools and associated resources followed the guidelines of Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act.[13]

OVERVIEW OF THE SOLUTION

The team created the EVS ART—an Excel-based tool that allows users simply to copy data provided by the OPM and paste them into a similarly formatted template. Upon clicking "Refresh," users can review conditionally formatted results, thoroughly compare prior years' data, and conduct a deeper-dive analysis of their outcomes.

EVS ART is different from other tools available to analyze FEVS data because users can arrive at actionable data quickly: the tool and output are easy to look at, the flow is intuitive, and the tool tells a story in a way that allows actionable target areas—and themes—to jump out. It is designed to be easy to use: it requires only basic Excel knowledge, it generates a user-friendly dashboard, and it captures and displays all OPM index measures and key categories.

The tool's utility lies in its simplicity of use but power in transforming massive amounts of information, allowing leaders to home in on important themes and compare prior years' data. EVS ART was designed so this can all be done in a few steps and as little as five minutes. EVS ART pulls data points from each of the main themes in the FEVS, such as employee engagement and global satisfaction. The tool organizes the survey results based on those themes by agency, subcomponent, and office, and it shows the change in responses for a specific item from year to year. This allows NIDDK senior leaders to monitor progress and evaluate the impact of strategies and interventions.

Instructions Tab

The first tab in EVS ART is the instructions tab (figure 9.12). Users enter the organization acronyms for the areas they wish to analyze and the year(s) of the results they wish to use. This information will automatically populate the headers and table titles on tabs throughout the Excel workbook.

Using FEVS data provided by the OPM, users copy and paste the information from their original FEVS data report into the corresponding EVS ART tab. No reformatting is required. This is done for each organization being compared. If prior year data are available, this step is repeated by pasting the data into the appropriate prior year tab(s). When this is completed, the user refreshes the data and EVS ART automatically populates the dashboard itself.

Dashboard Design

Upon feeding the data to EVS ART, users gain access to a dashboard that provides an overarching view of the organization's results. The dashboard delivers top-scoring questions for "positive," "neutral," and "negative" results, as well as the largest positive and negative shifts from one year to the next (figure 9.13). Below the charts, users are provided with a heat map that shows the average scores for each of the index measures and key categories, as well as their subcategories. This is helpful because it provides a clear visual at a high level and allows users to easily compare one organization to another.

The dashboard also provides a side-by-side visual comparison of FEVS results (figure 9.14). This helps users to determine areas of focus across the organization and identify areas that need more targeted intervention. The conditionally formatted heat-map feature uses color to show managers their highest and lowest scores and identifies areas that might be strengths or challenges for the agency or a specific office. While the dashboard shows where to start looking, the information behind it—in the remainder of the report—provides a path that intuitively narrows the broader topics down to specific focus areas.

Analysis Tabs

While the dashboard is a great place to start, the deeper-dive portion of the report takes the user from a general overview to more specific focus areas, where the organization's scores begin to tell a story. Figure 9.15 shows an example of an organization's percent-positive employee engagement index scores. At the top of the tab is the OPM's guidance for interpreting the results. In the case of the FEVS,

- Questions averaging 65 percent positive or higher are considered "strengths,"

- Questions averaging 50 percent neutral or higher may indicate "opportunities" for improved communication, and

- Questions averaging lower than 50 percent are considered "challenges."

FIGURE 9.12 Instructions Tab in the EVS ART

Source: Screenshot of EVS ART 2020, NIDDK.
Note: EVS ART = Employee Viewpoint Survey Analysis and Results Tool; NIDDK = National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases; OPM = Office of Personnel Management.

FIGURE 9.13 Landing Page of the EVS ART Dashboard
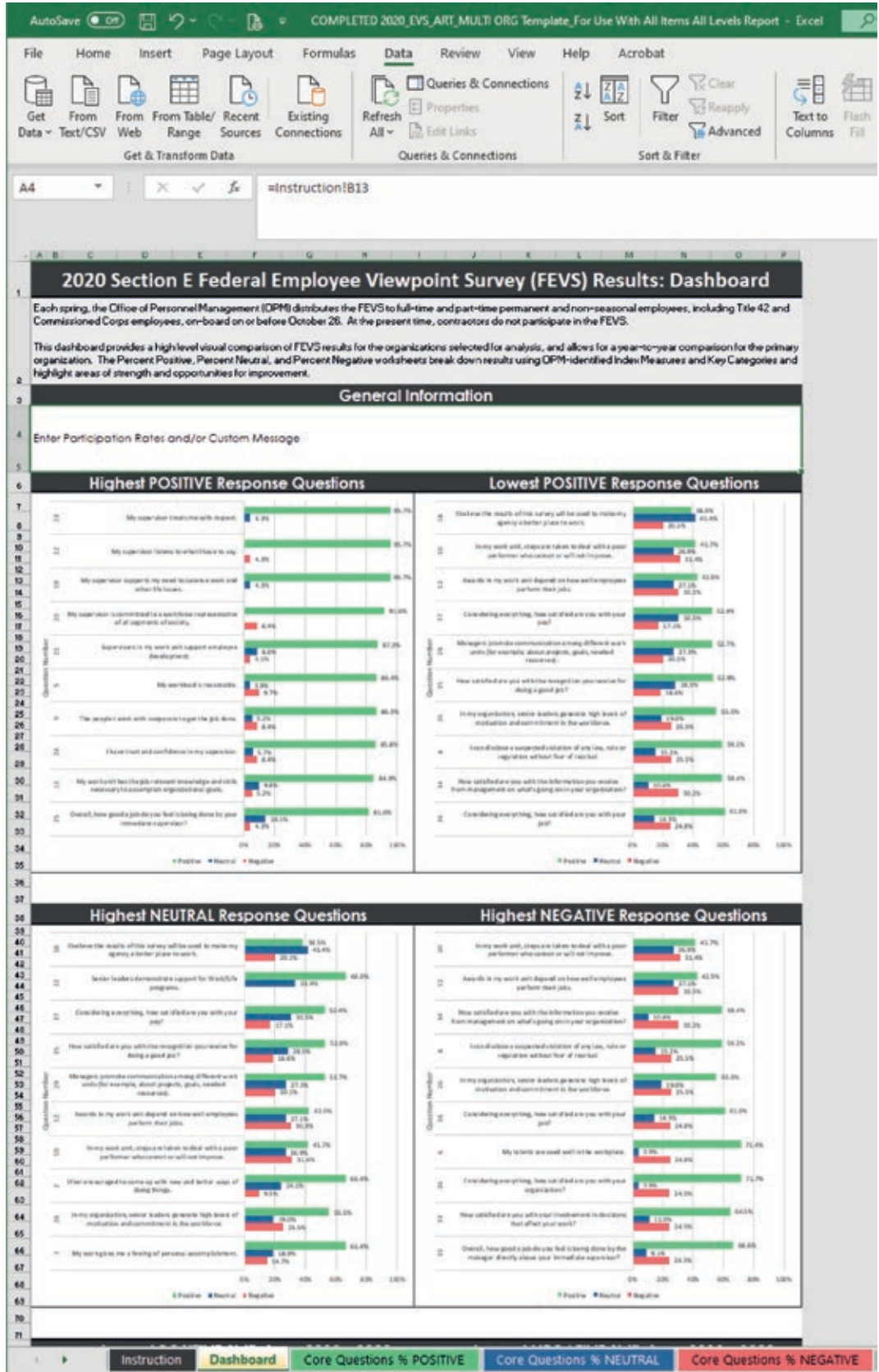
Source: Screenshot of EVS ART 2020, NIDDK.
Note: EVS ART = Employee Viewpoint Survey Analysis and Results Tool; NIDDK = National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases.

FIGURE 9.14   Results Comparison in the EVS ART Dashboard

Source: Screenshot of EVS ART 2020, NIDDK.
Note: EVS ART = Employee Viewpoint Survey Analysis and Results Tool; NIDDK = National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases.

FIGURE 9.15 Percentage of Positive Employee Engagement Scores from the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey

2020 Section E FEVS Results: Percent POSITIVE Scores

OPM has embedded indexes into the FEVS to provide agencies with additional measures for analysis and benchmarking, each calculated based on the average of associated questions. OPM provides the following guidance for interpreting results: A difference of 5 percentage points or more from one year to the next is "notable" or "meaningful". **Questions averaging 65% positive, or higher, are considered strengths.**

Conditional Formatting Scale

CHALLENGES are 50% Positive or lower ← OPPORTUNITY → STRENGTHS are 65% Positive or higher

22	15
Questions Scored >=65%	Questions Scored <65%

27	10
Questions IMPROVED from 2019	Questions DECLINED from 2019

Employee Engagement Index (EEI)

EEI measures the employees' sense of purpose that is evident in their display of dedication, persistence, and effort in their work or overall attachment to their organization and its mission. The subfactors include: Leaders Lead, Supervisors, and Intrinsic Work Experience.

	Dept A	Agency B	Division C	Branch D	Section E 2020	Section E 2019	Change
Employee Engagement Index Average	76.5%	82.1%	90.8%	93.8%	75.0%	69.4%	↑ 5.5%

Leaders Lead - Reflects the employees' perceptions of the integrity of leadership, as well as leadership behaviors such as communication and workforce motivation.

Prior Yr Q#	2020 Q#	Question Text	Dept A	Agency B	Division C	Branch D	Section E 2020	Section E 2019	Change
53	26	In my organization, senior leaders generate high levels of motivation and commitment in the workforce.	59.7%	71.5%	83.9%	90.6%	55.0%	52.5%	↑ 2.5%
54	27	My organization's senior leaders maintain high standards of honesty and integrity.	65.2%	78.5%	90.9%	96.1%	60.0%	58.1%	↑ 1.9%
56	28	Managers communicate the goals of the organization.	72.9%	78.9%	90.0%	96.3%	64.3%	47.0%	↑ 17.3%
60	30	Overall, how good a job do you feel is being done by the manager directly above your immediate supervisor?	71.7%	78.6%	91.9%	94.6%	66.6%	73.2%	↓ -6.6%
61	31	I have a high level of respect for my organization's senior leaders.	68.2%	79.5%	91.4%	94.6%	70.3%	67.0%	↑ 3.3%
		Average	67.5%	77.4%	89.6%	94.4%	63.2%	59.6%	↑ 3.7%

Tabs: Dashboard | Core Questions % POSITIVE | Core Questions % NEUTRAL | Core Questions % NEGATIVE | Telework & Work-Life | FEVS Action Plan | 2020 Core Questions

Source: Screenshot of EVS ART 2020, NIDDK.
Note: EVS ART = Employee Viewpoint Survey Analysis and Results Tool; FEVS = Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey; NIDDK = National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases; OPM = Office of Personnel Management.

EVS ART is conditionally formatted so that themes are easily identified. Users do not have to know how the tool works to be able to interpret the story or determine where they need to focus, where they have strengths, and where there are opportunities for improvement.

FIGURE 9.16 Percentage of Negative Employee Engagement Scores from the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey

2020 Section E FEVS Results: Percent NEGATIVE Scores

OPM has embedded indexes into the FEVS to provide agencies with additional measures for analysis and benchmarking, each calculated based on the average of associated questions. OPM provides the following guidance for interpreting results: A difference of 5 percentage points or more from one year to the next is "notable" or "meaningful". **Questions averaging 35% percent negative, or higher, are considered challenges.** For easy identification, challenges are conditionally formatted to turn red.

Conditional Formatting Scale

35% or higher is considered a CHALLENGE

1	36	27	10
Questions Scored >=35%	Questions Scored <35%	Questions IMPROVED from 2019	Questions DECLINED from 2019

Employee Engagement Index (EEI)

EEI measures the employees' sense of purpose that is evident in their display of dedication, persistence, and effort in their work or overall attachment to their organization and its mission. The subfactors include: Leaders Lead, Supervisors, and Intrinsic Work Experience.

	Dept A	Agency B	Division C	Branch D		Section E 2020	Section E 2019	Change
Employee Engagement Index Average	10.2%	6.9%	2.8%	1.5%		13.6%	24.5%	⬇ -10.9%

Leaders Lead - Reflects the employees' perceptions of the integrity of leadership, as well as leadership behaviors such as communication and workforce motivation.

Prior Yr Q#	2020 Q#	Question Text	Dept A	Agency B	Division C	Branch D		Section E 2020	Section E 2019	Change
53	26	In my organization, senior leaders generate high levels of motivation and commitment in the workforce.	19.1%	11.9%	5.0%	1.8%		15.0%	40.5%	⬇ -25.5%
54	27	My organization's senior leaders maintain high standards of honesty and integrity.	14.6%	7.6%	3.0%	0.0%		35.0%	41.9%	⬇ -6.9%
56	28	Managers communicate the goals of the organization.	11.6%	7.4%	3.2%	0.0%		20.1%	34.8%	⬇ -14.7%
60	30	Overall, how good a job do you feel is being done by the manager directly above your immediate supervisor?	10.2%	6.7%	1.8%	0.0%		24.3%	13.7%	⬆ 10.6%
61	31	I have a high level of respect for my organization's senior leaders.	13.1%	7.4%	2.6%	0.0%		14.8%	20.3%	⬇ -5.5%
		Average	13.7%	8.2%	3.1%	0.4%		21.8%	30.2%	⬇ -8.4%

Dashboard | Core Questions % POSITIVE | Core Questions % NEUTRAL | Core Questions % NEGATIVE | Telework & Work-Life | FEVS Action Plan | 2020 Core Questions

Source: Screenshot of EVS ART 2020, NIDDK.
Note: EVS ART = Employee Viewpoint Survey Analysis and Results Tool; FEVS = Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey; NIDDK = National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases; OPM = Office of Personnel Management.
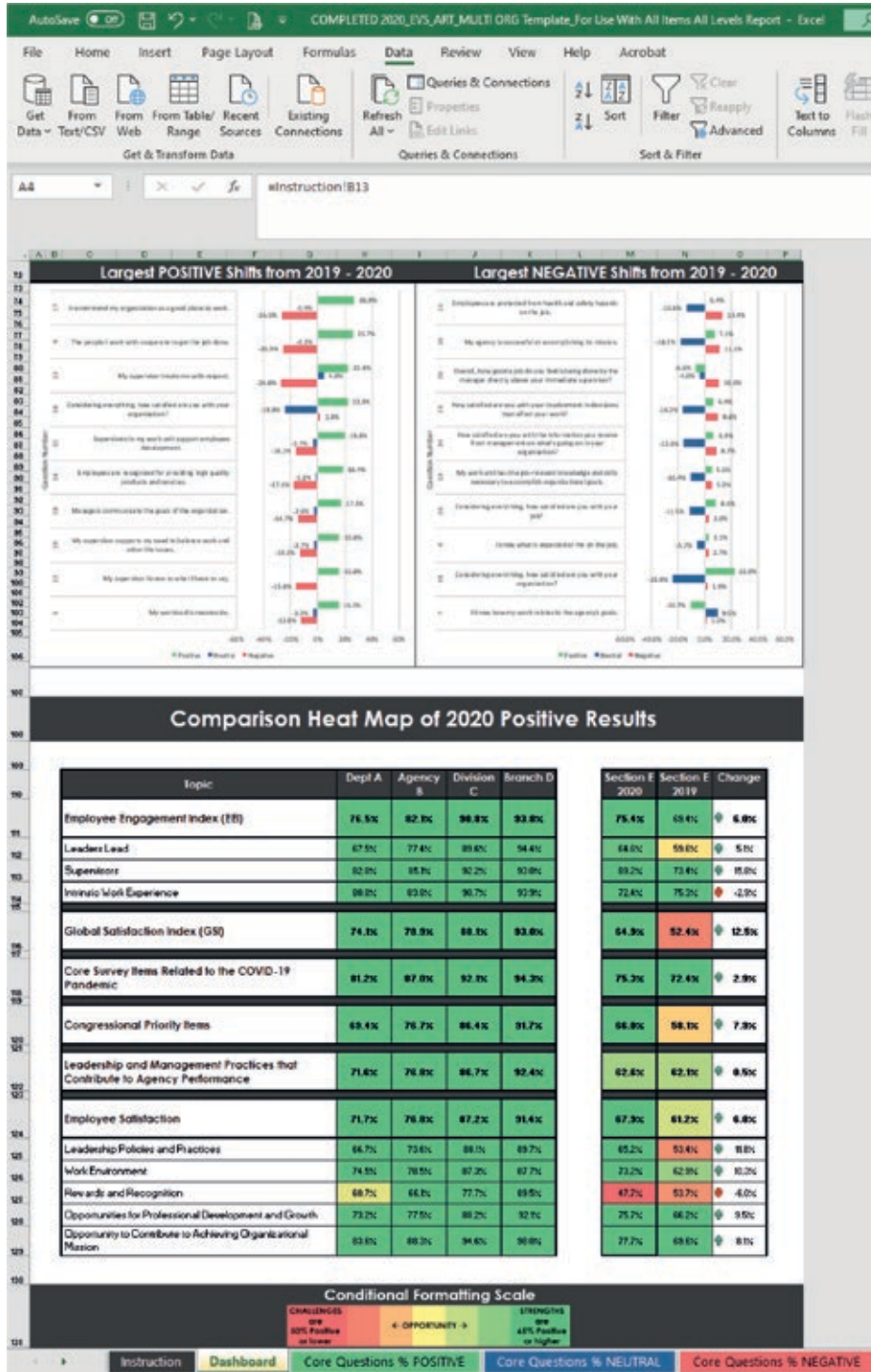
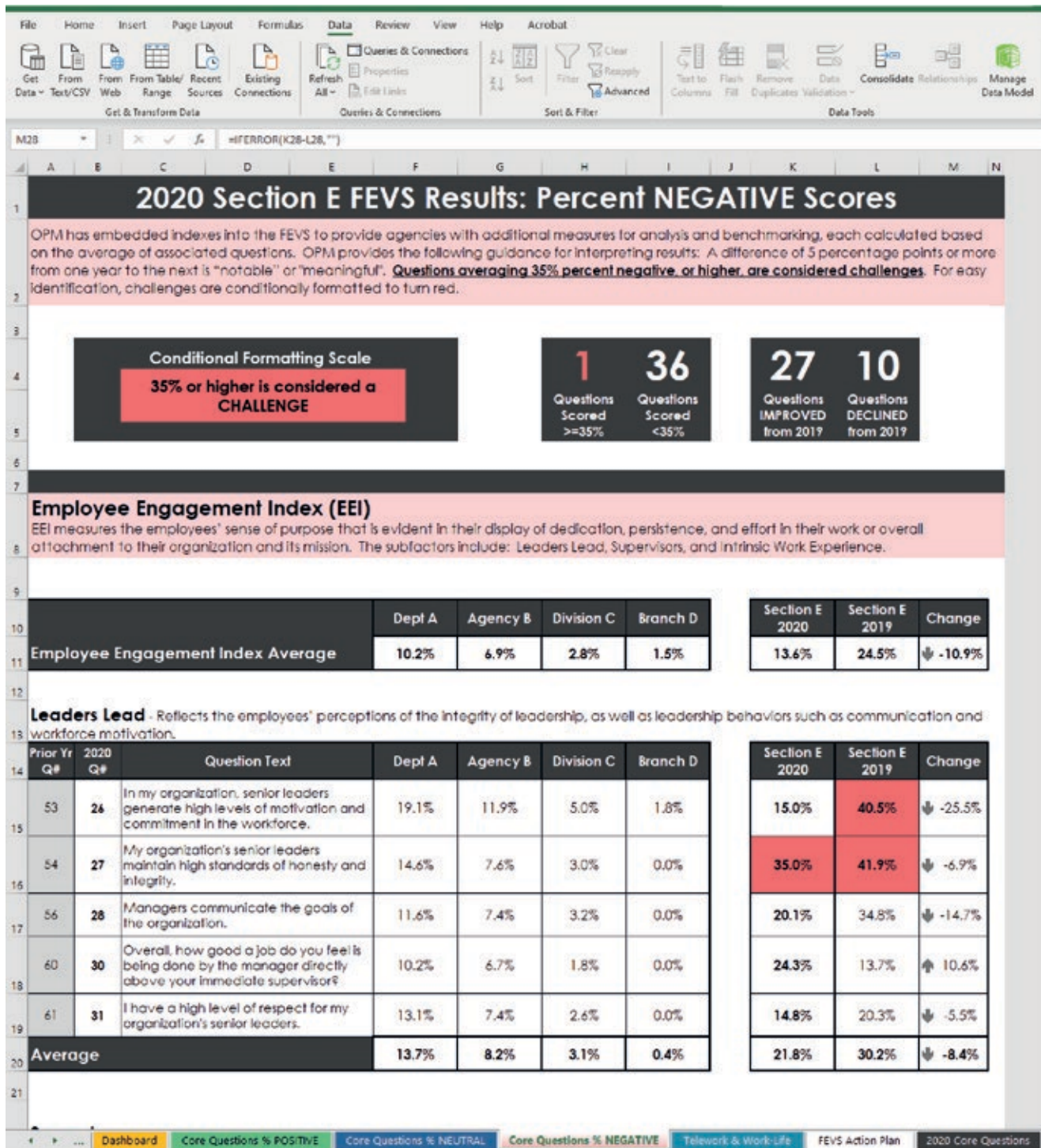It became clear that one should look beyond whether scores are positive or not. Often, federal leaders focus solely on questions that average 65 percent positive or lower. While this is important, going beyond to review both neutral and negative scores can provide clarity (figure 9.16). For instance, there is a big difference between a *low positive score with a high neutral score* and a *low positive score with a*

high negative score. While a low positive score is not preferable, if it is paired with a high neutral score, it could indicate an opportunity for communication and clarification, whereas a low positive score paired with a high negative score clearly indicates a problem area.

Action-Planning Tab

Effective action planning can transform data into meaningful change. The EVS ART action-planning tab is designed to help initiate the process and determine next steps (see figure 9.17). After reviewing the results, users can

- Identify focus areas (these areas can align with OPM index measures and key categories or can be customized to reflect areas of interest),

- Enter related FEVS question numbers (data will automatically populate based on the question number selected),

- Brainstorm initiatives and interventions geared toward improving focus areas, considering both the potential impact and available resources,

- Designate a lead person or office to address each focus area, and

- Assign target completion dates.

Implementation and Reform Sequence

When initiating the development of the tool, the team first identified the questions that made up each of the FEVS index measures. This was a bigger challenge than anticipated because no one document contained all the information needed, so they created their own. The team scoured the OPM's FEVS technical guides going back to 2012 to identify each measure, its definition, and the associated survey questions. They compiled a master document with this information that is still in use today.

The team also faced their own learning curve. They had a creative vision of what they wanted to accomplish, what they wanted the tool to look like, and what they wanted it to do, but they did not necessarily have the expertise to accomplish it—or so they thought. So the team began to work backward, peeling back the layers of what they anticipated the final product would look like, then researching and teaching themselves how to accomplish each step along the way.

Whether it was the visual appearance and flow or the inner workings of many hidden pivot tables and charts, each task was new, each was important, and each was tackled and then painstakingly built out, tested, adjusted, and then tested again. With each success came a small victory that fueled the next challenge. The analyst team looked for gaps, identified opportunities for improvement, and created efficiencies—and this project provided all of that and more. They knew that what they were creating could feasibly make a difference in the way the FEVS was used and valued governmentwide.

Upon completion, the NIDDK team recognized that the dashboard could be useful in other contexts and decided to share it broadly. Little did they know that getting the word out and giving the tool to other departments and agencies would prove to be more of a challenge than building the tool itself. First and foremost, the creation of EVS ART began as a grassroots effort, far removed from those who managed and administered the FEVS. The NIDDK team began sharing their tool across their agency, but the department had little influence in sharing it broadly.

When the team gained the attention of the US Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the OPM, all of that changed. The NIDDK team was invited to present to the OMB and the OPM. The OMB was impressed with EVS ART and praised the work done by the NIDDK.[14] The OMB and the OPM organized a venue during which the NIDDK shared the tool with federal chief human capital officers (CHCOs) governmentwide. With the amplification of this extraordinary tool, the team received numerous requests for

FIGURE 9.17   Sample Action-Planning Tab in the EVS ART

Source: Screenshot of EVS ART 2020, NIDDK.
Note: EVS ART = Employee Viewpoint Survey Analysis and Results Tool; NIDDK = National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases; OPM = Office of Personnel Management.

demonstration of EVS ART from agencies and departments outside of their own. This was a challenge in itself for the team of three because many of the organizations expressing interest in the tool were within the same agency or department but siloed from one another, resulting in multiple requests from each. Additionally, due to turnover in political leadership, there were requests to return to organizations to share with new leaders the capabilities of EVS ART and the progress recognized by the NIDDK when their FEVS results were used to inform change.

The enormity of the US federal government made it more and more difficult to manage such requests. The NIDDK team established an online presence, which allowed federal employees to access the tool and

its training resources. The OPM also offered EVS ART as a resource to agencies and departments as part of work being done under the President's Management Agenda. The collaboration between the NIDDK, the OPM, and the OMB blossomed, and since 2017, the NIDDK team has conducted hundreds of presentations, trainings, and customized workshops that have reached personnel in each of the 15 executive departments. These meetings and training sessions continue because the team has found that organizations at all levels within departments are interested in learning about successful practices.

It was important to the team that other federal employees knew of EVS ART's availability, and equally important that they benefited from it, but it was also important that no outside entity unduly profit from its use. EVS ART was created by federal employees, for federal employees, using resources readily available and with no contractor support. Realizing its benefit and potential, the NIDDK elected to share its tool with any and all federal entities expressing interest, free of charge. Its view as a steward of federal funds was that it had done the work and, by sharing its tool, others could avoid duplicating its efforts and could create extraordinary efficiencies within their own organizations. Many organizations had spent weeks, if not months, and sometimes thousands of federal dollars on outside consultants to do what they could now do for themselves in minutes using EVS ART. The NIDDK has received numerous requests from outside vendors and consultants related to the use of its tool in support of work they are doing for other federal organizations—and even requests for unlocked versions that they can modify for their own use with federal clientele. This goes against the grain of the NIDDK's vision for sharing the tool at no cost. The team does not want federal funds to be used, perhaps unknowingly, to pay for a tool available for free.

Feedback, Flexibility, and Continuous Improvement

End users of EVS ART have expressed gratitude for the tool.[15] Having this tool helps leadership to see data in one place, or by field office if they like. This tool gives the flexibility to do that, and quickly, economizing time. The way the analysis and reports are organized makes the data clearer, which makes for faster analysis of employee feedback and allows leadership to address the question "what now?" so that agencies can develop a plan of action based on employee responses.

EVS ART was designed to provide users with many ways to view data. It offers a dashboard, heat maps, breakouts by index measure, and bar charts. However, there is always the desire to display data in different ways. Early on when the team received requests from users to modify the tool, they provided unlocked versions to those requesting to make modifications. After seeing the inner workings of EVS ART, and the thought that went into the creation of the tool, a user remarked that "it look[ed] easier than it really is," and this is true.

The team learned, through trial and error, that it was not wise to share unlocked versions of the tool. There are numerous pivot tables and charts and thousands of links and formulas in each of the templates. Breaking any one of them could compromise the analysis. Because of this, they decided to no longer provide unlocked versions and instead to collect the feedback received and use that information to improve the templates each year.

LESSONS LEARNED

The project taught the implementation team a set of lessons:

- **Cost does not equal worth.** A tool does not have to be expensive to provide extraordinary value.

- **Keep the solution simple.** While the inner workings of a tool may venture over to the complex side, do not make the act of engaging with the analysis complex for users, or they will not use it.

- **Make the solution accessible to all.** This means two things. One, ensure that the tool is accessible to those with disabilities, and two, make it available to the broadest audience possible. If people do not

know about the tool, they will continue to spend unnecessary time re-creating analyses and unnecessary money on contracts to conduct analyses, or they may simply do nothing with the valuable information they have at their fingertips.

● **Ensure that the output of the tool is intuitive and useful.** Do not make users reanalyze the analysis—the tool should do the work for them the first time. Provide results in a format that can be utilized for presentation.

● **Tell the story.** Do not overwhelm end users. Offer a high-level visual overview and then direct them down an intuitive path to more specific details.

● **Be transparent.** When working with results, whether positive or negative, do not shy away from difficult conversations. Survey takers already know whether something is working well or not. Be up front, dig deeper, and let them know that their input will drive change.

● **Tie actions back to survey feedback.** When creating initiatives based on feedback obtained through a survey, it is important to tie the organization's actions back to the voice of the people. This will increase engagement, add validity to the survey, and in most cases, increase future participation.

What was the most basic lesson learned? Great things can come from grassroots efforts.

IMPACT OF THE SOLUTION

The introduction of EVS ART created immediate efficiencies in both the time and cost of completing the FEVS analysis. Colleagues at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) experienced a significant reduction in the time spent conducting FEVS analysis. Prior to EVS ART, they produced 24 reports in 72 workdays at a cost of approximately US$30,861. Reporting can now be done in one workday at a cost of approximately US$1,129—a savings of US$29,732 and a 96 percent reduction in both time and cost. These efficiencies have allowed the CDC to increase its reporting sixfold to 150 individual analyses—meaning that 126 additional managers now receive their own customized FEVS results.

An NIH analyst who once spent 30 hours creating one report at an average cost of US$1,350 can now complete an analysis in less than 5 minutes at a cost of US$3.75. Simplifying the analysis process means that frontline managers can access meaningful data to better inform policies, programs, and initiatives much sooner. They can also have confidence that the information they are using to create or bolster initiatives is coming directly from those whom their actions impact most.

BEYOND ANALYTICS: CREATING MEASURABLE AND SUSTAINABLE CHANGE

While the efficiencies created by EVS ART have helped save both time and money, the most important aspect, by far, has been the increased ability to identify themes and measure organizational change (see figure 9.18).

One example of a success story concerns the transformation of an underperforming organization. This organization was forward facing and interfaced with all 1,300 institute employees. To remedy its underperformance, the NIDDK Executive Officer stepped in with a multipronged approach and, over the course of a year,

● Put in place new standards and forms of accountability, including metrics to measure productivity (industry standards),

FIGURE 9.18 Identifying Challenges through the EVS ART

FEVS Index Measures	EO Sub Office 2015
Employee Engagement Index (EEI)	**53.3%**
Leaders Lead	56.3%
Supervisors	49.5%
Intrinsic Work Experience	54.0%
Global Satisfaction Index (GSI)	**41.8%**
Effective Communication Index (ECI)	**49.2%**
Employee and Supervisor	51.9%
Leader / Manager / Organizational	46.5%
New Inclusion Quotient (New IQ)	**51.6%**
Fair	46.0%
Open	65.9%
Cooperative	39.4%
Supportive	57.2%
Empowering	49.2%
Human Capital Assessment and Accountability Framework (HCAAF)	**54.5%**
Leadership & Knowledge Management	53.3%
Results-Oriented Performance Culture	51.8%
Talent Management	60.7%
Job Satisfaction	52.3%

FEVS Key Categories	EO Sub Office 2015
My Work Experience	65.1%
My Work Unit	50.3%
My Agency	56.8%
My Supervisors/Team Leaders	54.6%
My Leadership	56.7%
My Satisfaction	42.7%
AVERAGE	54.3%

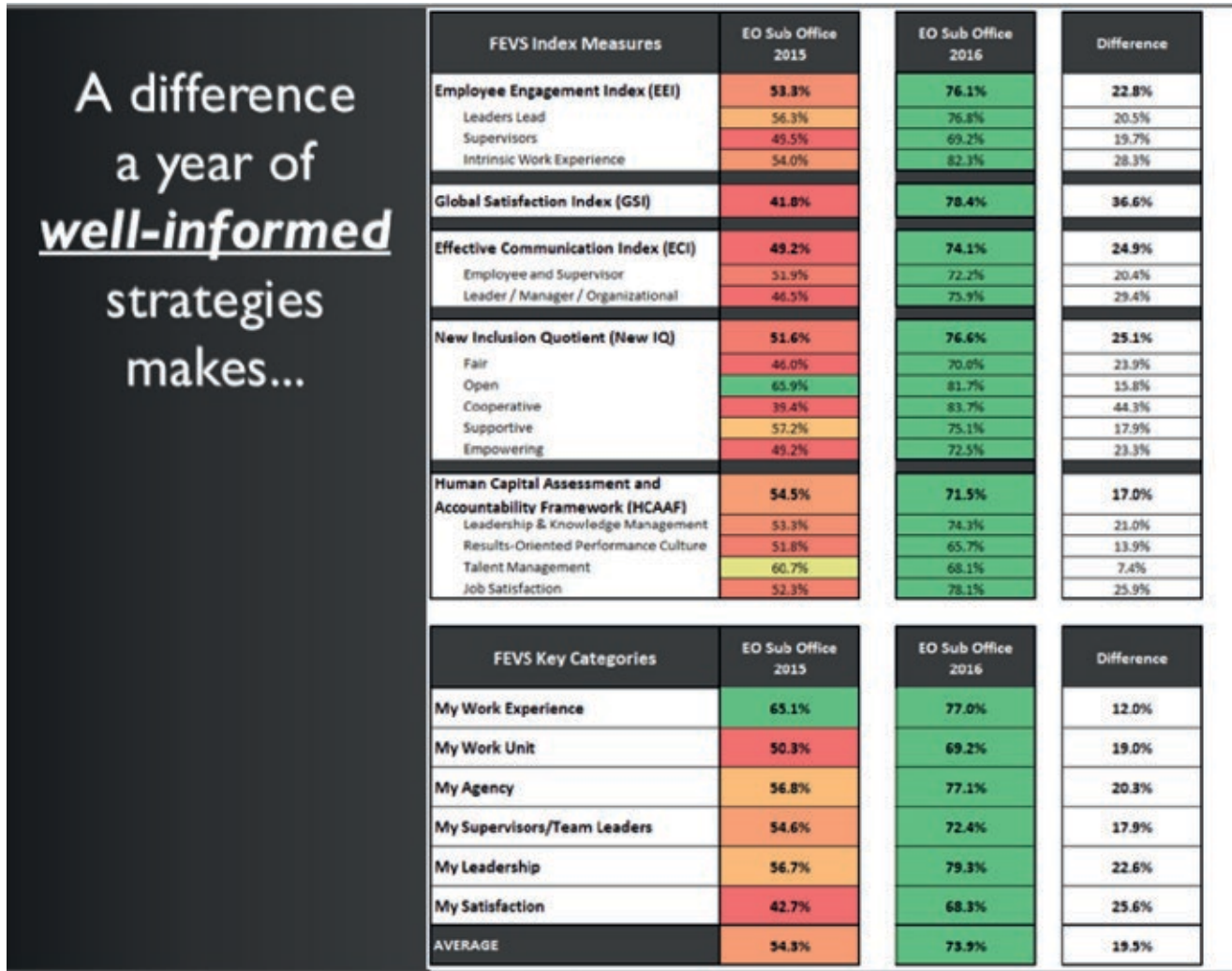*Source:* Original figure for this publication, NIDDK.
Note: EO = executive office; EVS ART = Employee Viewpoint Survey Analysis and Results Tool; FEVS = Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey; NIDDK = National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases.

- Worked closely with leaders to create a new vision for the group,

- Changed out leaders who did not embrace the new vision,

- Taught necessary competencies to supervisors,

- Created opportunities for high performers,

- Ensured that mediocrity was not acceptable and that there were consequences for poor performance, not only for employees but also for leaders, and

- Worked closely with the employees of the organization so they knew in real time what changes were happening and why, ensuring that each employee within the organization had a voice.

Over the course of a year, the organization was transformed. Employees knew it because service improved, complaints were greatly reduced, and partnerships began to form. By using EVS ART, the NIDDK was able to prove that its targeted interventions were working. Figure 9.19 illustrates the transformation from one year to the next. The employee engagement index went up by 22.8 percentage points, the global satisfaction index went up 36.6 percentage points, and the new inclusion quotient increased from 51.6 percent to 76.6 percent positive.[16]

NIDDK staff recognized the transformation, and confidence in the organization returned. The work continues to pay off, and five years later, the success of the interventions is still clearly demonstrated (see figure 9.20).

FIGURE 9.19   Changes in Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey Index Measures, 2015–16

FEVS Index Measures	EO Sub Office 2015	EO Sub Office 2016	Difference
Employee Engagement Index (EEI)	53.3%	76.1%	22.8%
Leaders Lead	56.3%	76.8%	20.5%
Supervisors	49.5%	69.2%	19.7%
Intrinsic Work Experience	54.0%	82.3%	28.3%
Global Satisfaction Index (GSI)	41.8%	78.4%	36.6%
Effective Communication Index (ECI)	49.2%	74.1%	24.9%
Employee and Supervisor	51.9%	72.2%	20.4%
Leader / Manager / Organizational	46.5%	75.9%	29.4%
New Inclusion Quotient (New IQ)	51.6%	76.6%	25.1%
Fair	46.0%	70.0%	23.9%
Open	65.9%	81.7%	15.8%
Cooperative	39.4%	83.7%	44.3%
Supportive	57.2%	75.1%	17.9%
Empowering	49.2%	72.5%	23.3%
Human Capital Assessment and Accountability Framework (HCAAF)	54.5%	71.5%	17.0%
Leadership & Knowledge Management	53.3%	74.3%	21.0%
Results-Oriented Performance Culture	51.8%	65.7%	13.9%
Talent Management	60.7%	68.1%	7.4%
Job Satisfaction	52.3%	78.1%	25.9%

FEVS Key Categories	EO Sub Office 2015	EO Sub Office 2016	Difference
My Work Experience	65.1%	77.0%	12.0%
My Work Unit	50.3%	69.2%	19.0%
My Agency	56.8%	77.1%	20.3%
My Supervisors/Team Leaders	54.6%	72.4%	17.9%
My Leadership	56.7%	79.3%	22.6%
My Satisfaction	42.7%	68.3%	25.6%
AVERAGE	54.3%	73.9%	19.5%

Source: Original figure for this publication, NIDDK.
Note: EO = executive office; FEVS = Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey; NIDDK = National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases.

Performance Management in Practice

The same success has played out across the institute. In addition to targeted interventions, to be a truly performance-centric organization, performance management must be incorporated into an organization's culture continuously. NIDDK leadership routinely finds opportunities across the institute to highlight the importance of performance standards and conversations.

At the NIDDK, people throughout the organization shared via the FEVS that they wanted discussions with their supervisors about their performance to be more worthwhile: they wanted their supervisors to provide them with more constructive suggestions about how to improve their job performance and to give them meaningful recognition when they had done a good job. To address this, the NIDDK Executive Officer initiated the following practices:

● Reviewing performance ratings across the entire organization to make sure that all supervisors were interpreting "outstanding" rating requirements, versus "excellent" and "satisfactory" ones, in the same way and that, where appropriate, they were giving lower ratings when deserved rather than ignoring underperformance

FIGURE 9.20 Changes in Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey Index Measures, 2015–19

...and the work _continues_ to pay dividends!

FEVS Index Measures	EO Sub Office 2015	EO Sub Office 2019	Difference
Employee Engagement Index (EEI)	53.3%	85.7%	32.4%
Leaders Lead	56.3%	89.6%	33.3%
Supervisors	49.5%	84.7%	35.2%
Intrinsic Work Experience	54.0%	82.8%	28.8%
Global Satisfaction Index (GSI)	41.8%	84.4%	42.6%
Effective Communication Index (ECI)	49.2%	84.7%	35.5%
Employee and Supervisor	51.9%	82.5%	30.6%
Leader / Manager / Organizational	46.5%	87.0%	40.5%
New Inclusion Quotient (New IQ)	51.6%	82.1%	30.6%
Fair	46.0%	75.1%	29.1%
Open	65.9%	81.7%	15.8%
Cooperative	39.4%	86.8%	47.4%
Supportive	57.2%	87.9%	30.7%
Empowering	49.2%	79.0%	29.8%
Human Capital Assessment and Accountability Framework (HCAAF)	54.5%	81.4%	26.8%
Leadership & Knowledge Management	53.3%	87.7%	34.4%
Results-Oriented Performance Culture	51.8%	77.3%	25.5%
Talent Management	60.7%	81.5%	20.8%
Job Satisfaction	52.3%	79.0%	26.7%

FEVS Key Categories	EO Sub Office 2015	EO Sub Office 2019	Difference
My Work Experience	65.1%	84.7%	19.6%
My Work Unit	50.3%	83.0%	32.7%
My Agency	56.8%	78.0%	21.3%
My Supervisors/Team Leaders	54.6%	84.5%	29.9%
My Leadership	56.7%	90.2%	33.5%
My Satisfaction	42.7%	79.3%	36.6%
AVERAGE	54.3%	83.3%	28.9%

Source: Original figure for this publication, NIDDK.
Note: EO = executive office; FEVS = Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey; NIDDK = National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases.

- Reviewing all awards and retention incentives to make sure there was equity and fairness in who received awards and in what amounts

- Sending mid-year and end-of-year communications to the NIDDK's supervisors, reiterating what employees had said and emphasizing that staff played an active role in their performance conversations

- Sending communications to staff reminding them that what they said was important and encouraging them to play an active role in their performance conversations

- Sharing the document "Performance Management Tips and Templates" with both supervisors and staff to equip them with the tools they needed to have more robust performance conversations.

Over time, the people of the organization saw a noticeable change in performance management, which the NIDDK has validated using the FEVS and EVS ART. Traditionally, one of the lowest-scoring questions across government has been "In my work unit, steps are taken to deal with a poor performer who cannot or will not improve." This is one of the most difficult questions to tackle across the government. Many

FIGURE 9.21 Improving Measures of Accountability at the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases

Accountability…

Organization	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Change from 2015 to 2019
Governmentwide	28%	29%	31%	32%	34%	6%
HHS	34%	35%	38%	39%	40%	6%
NIH	39%	41%	43%	46%	46%	7%
NIDDK/EO	57%	56%	70%	73%	86%	29%

FEVS question:

In my work unit, steps are taken to deal with a poor performer who cannot or will not improve.

NIH — National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases

Source: Original figure for this publication, NIDDK.
Note: EO = executive office; FEVS = Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey; HHS = Health and Human Services; NIDDK = National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases; NIH = National Institutes of Health.

federal leaders have said that it should be removed from the FEVS because, due to the confidential nature of employee relations, it is nearly impossible to demonstrate that actions are being taken.[17]

However, the NIDDK proved that it is possible. Leaders throughout the institute devoted resources to assist supervisors and employees early on when there were problems with performance or conduct. The key was creating a culture where early intervention occurs and clear standards and accountabilities are established and transparent. When this was done, staff began to notice underperforming organizations improve (see figure 9.21).

CHALLENGES FACED AND THE PATH FORWARD

The biggest challenge for the NIDDK team has been balancing their traditional responsibilities with the demands of creating, modifying, and supporting a tool that has gained in popularity. Since its inception, EVS ART has been enhanced to expand its capabilities several times due to the NIDDK's desire to strive for continuous improvement based on feedback received from users. The FEVS itself has undergone changes over the last three years, and EVS ART has required substantial modification to adapt to those changes as well. The team has learned that, while there is great satisfaction in being able to provide their federal colleagues with a tool that evolves with their needs, this also means that their work is never really done.

One function not yet incorporated by the tool's creator is the ability of the tool to determine statistical significance in changes from one year to the next, or between organizations of similar or different sizes. The addition of this capability could help to "win over" survey cynics. Last, with the topics of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility at the forefront of conversations within the United States, it would be helpful to have the ability to compare data using different demographics, such as race and ethnicity. This is something that the NIDDK team is actively working on. While not all users have access to this level of data, the team would like to provide a similar user-friendly reporting format to those who do have access.

CONCLUSION

All leaders aspire to create and sustain high-functioning organizations. How can organizations achieve high-functioning performance, much less provide measurable evidence that they have reached this goal?

The synergy between technology for data analytics and the voice of the people can be powerful. It can inform a leader's strategy and resource allocation and provide evidence that an organization's performance and engagement activities are paying off. The NIDDK now uses the FEVS as a launchpad for moving forward, not as a report card looking back. It is with this in mind that it put into effect the year-round campaign "You Speak … We Listen … Things Happen!" to reiterate to employees that it is constantly listening to their voices and taking their feedback into account in the planning of programs and initiatives. Leadership incorporates this campaign into email communications, posters, and all-hands meetings to remind employees that their voices make a difference.

The NIDDK Executive Officer also conducts workshops to build communities and connect with staff. Early on, these workshops were used as part of targeted interventions. Now, as a very high-functioning organization, the NIDDK has transitioned to more strategic initiatives. It does this by harnessing the talents of staff who have relevant interests and technical expertise that extend beyond their functional areas to deliver workshops that continue to strengthen employee development—in lieu of bringing in outside facilitators. It focuses on career development, offering world cafés that allow staff one-on-one interaction with senior leaders from across the NIH who volunteer to share experiences, as well as specialized workshops on resilience, problem solving, conducting difficult conversations, and managing up.

Another part of the NIDDK's success has been in creating many strategic initiatives. Some of the more novel programs it has put in place, which have resulted in an increase in FEVS scores and in employee engagement across the institute, include using crowdsourcing to initiate conversations and capture ideas, incorporating pulse surveys into town halls, and conducting stay and exit interviews with staff. In addition, it has created a novel awards program to recognize "rising stars," innovative problem solving, and personification of the organization's core values. It has also focused on the professional and career development of staff through the launch of a formal mentoring program, a shadowing program, a new supervisors program, and the novel Career Climbers Cohort, which was specifically designed for staff who were junior in experience or brand new to the federal workforce. Each of these initiatives, programs, and activities has been informed by the institute's employees. This largely explains the institute's success in the FEVS's "Belief in Action" question: "I believe the results of this survey will be used to make my agency a better place to work." Across government, this question has traditionally scored incredibly low—but at the NIDDK, that has changed.

In 2015, the NIDDK was able to do its first deeper-dive analysis using an early version of EVS ART. Armed with this information, they set out to create employee-informed change, and this did not go unnoticed. Between 2015 and 2016, the NIDDK Executive Office's positive responses to the "Belief in

Action" question jumped by 14 percentage points, from 52 percent to 66 percent. In 2020, this same office recognized a "Belief in Action" score that was 90 percent positive—a jump of 38 percentage points from 2014 (see figure 9.22).

With the increase in "Belief in Action" scores, survey response rates increased as well. The NIDDK's overall employee participation increased from 36.8 percent to 74.5 percent (see figure 9.23).

Very basic things are needed to help ensure an organization's success. An organization requires reliable and real-time data, the ability to keep a finger on its own pulse, and the ability to tie organizational interventions and strategic initiatives back to employees' voices. Data are only meaningful when they are accounted for, acted upon, and shared with staff. They must be incorporated into the organization's culture and practices on a daily basis. The result is an amazing ripple effect (figure 9.24).

In closing, EVS ART is an incredible resource, but it is important to remember that the tool itself cannot create change—it can only inform it. The magic lies in what is done with the information it provides. The importance of leadership buy-in and action, at all levels, is critical, and a leader's level of buy-in can either help or hinder an organization's success. When leaders effectively use employee feedback to create timely, well-informed, and meaningful initiatives, the rest will begin to fall into place—and that is a wonderful cycle to be in.

FIGURE 9.22   "Belief in Action" Scores from the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, 2014–20

Belief in Action…

| Organization	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Change from 2014 to 2020
Governmentwide	38%	39%	41%	42%	41%	41%	43%	5%
HHS	47%	49%	52%	54%	55%	56%	57%	10%
NIH	46%	48%	53%	56%	59%	59%	62%	16%
NIDDK	50%	55%	69%	71%	74%	73%	76%	25%
NIDDK/EO	52%	66%	76%	83%	77%	88%	90%	38%

FEVS question:

I believe the results of this survey will be used to make my agency a better place to work.

Source: Original figure for this publication, NIDDK.
Note: EO = executive office; FEVS = Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey; HHS = Health and Human Services; NIDDK = National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases; NIH = National Institutes of Health.

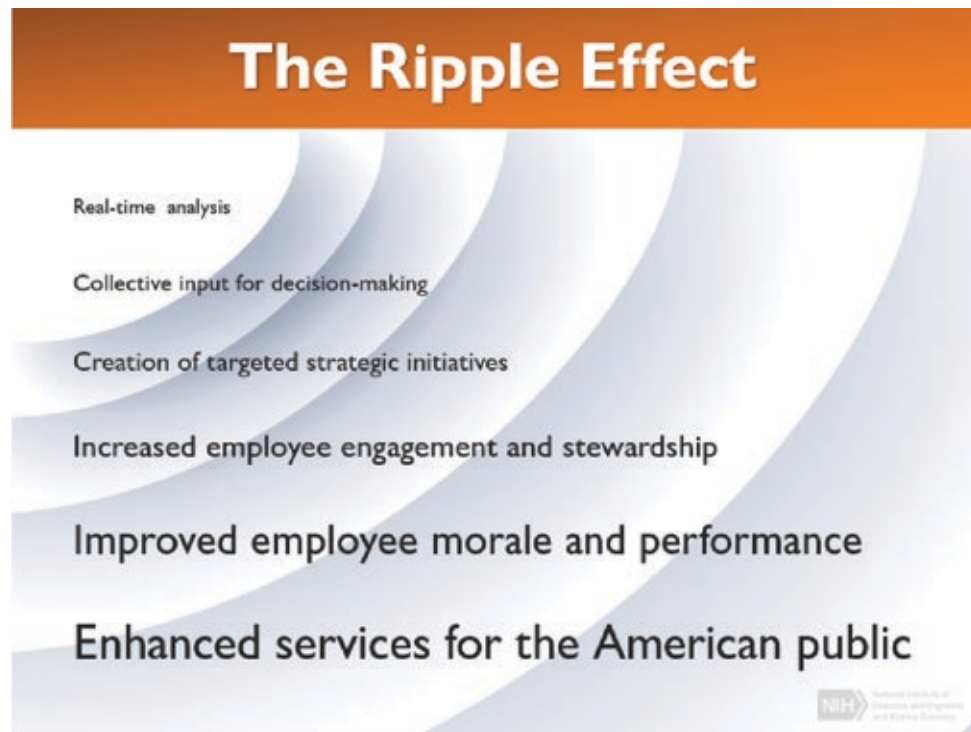**FIGURE 9.23**   Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey Participation Rates, 2014–20
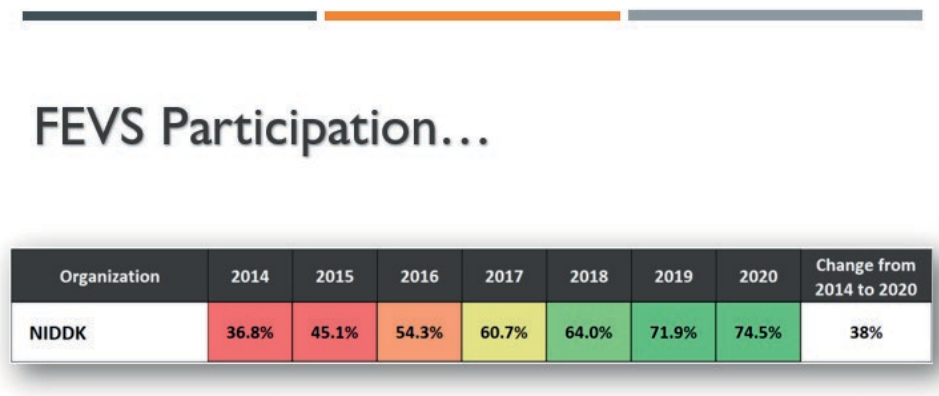
Source: Original figure for this publication, NIDDK.
Note: FEVS = Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey; NIDDK = National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases.

FIGURE 9.24   The Ripple Effect

Source: Original figure for this publication, NIDDK.
Note: NIDDK = National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases.