

## CHAPTER 26

# Using Survey Findings for Public Action

## The Experience of the US Federal Government

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### SUMMARY

Generating coherent public employee survey data is only the first step in using staff surveys to stimulate public service reform. The experiences of agencies of the United States federal government in using the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) provide lessons in the translation of survey results to improvements in specific public agencies and public administration in general. Architecture at the agency level that supports this translation process is critical and typically includes a technical expert capable of interpreting survey data, a strong relationship between this expert and a senior manager, and the development of a culture or reputation for survey-informed agency change and development initiatives. This chapter outlines the way that the FEVS, its enabling institutional environment, and corresponding cultural practices have been developed to act as the basis for public sector action.

### ANALYTICS IN PRACTICE

- Generating coherent survey data that describe the state of the public administration is a vital foundation for inspiring effective reform of the public service. But it is only the first step. Complementary efforts to stimulate the use of that survey data are vital for achieving corresponding change.

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- Survey questions should aim at action from the beginning by asking about topics that staff and senior leaders find most challenging to the achievement of their mission. Designing questions with the chain of policy influence and action in mind prevents the survey process from being weakened at inception by a poor focus on what is important to public sector stakeholders.
- Public action from surveys of public employees requires at least one technical expert capable of analyzing and interpreting survey results and translating them into a clear action plan for the improvement of a specific unit or organization. This may simply entail using the survey as a launchpad to learn more about the issue from people in the organization. At the scale of many public sector organizations, this survey analyst should be embedded within the individual organization. This will provide them with sufficient time and focus to promote, digest, and translate survey findings as a core component of their work program. Given that many of the improvements in public sector organizations have capable personnel driving them, providing an official with the time required to anchor relevant discussions with colleagues is a necessary component of reform.
- Rich survey data and technical expertise to digest their implications are insufficient for public action. Any survey analyst or team must have a strong relationship with a senior manager who sees the value of the survey data for agency reform. Such a manager acts as a bridge between the technical translation of the survey into a form usable by an organization and the strategic processes required to build momentum for change. Rich survey data can generate political will by identifying or making salient significant inequities, opportunities for improved performance, or problematic parts of the agency. However, the case study outlined in this chapter, concerning the United States federal government, implies that a senior manager must champion change for substantial public action to occur. While the skills of the technical expert are important, the accountability and responsibility for developing a sustainable action plan rest on supervisors and leaders.
- For reform to be sustained, the technical staff and the leaders who are the “change champions” must inculcate and manage a culture of using survey data for public service reform. The easiest way to do this is to rapidly respond to issues identified by surveys, with leaders transparently sharing survey results with the workforce and emphasizing the results they deem most important. Leaders should then show staff how they are further exploring the results and creating initiatives that speak directly to the findings. Visible leadership responses to survey results will generate broader buy-in from agency staff, which will strengthen the credibility of the survey process and catalyze the impact of managerial responses. Changes in public administration typically require a coproduction approach, with both managers and staff moving toward improvements. For example, if staff feel that their capacity to perform is not being sufficiently developed, management must make opportunities for capacity development available and feasible to take up, while staff must take those opportunities and put in the effort required for learning.
- A centralized, governmentwide office in charge of survey design and implementation is useful for several reasons. First, there are important methodological decisions that affect all survey users equally but are costly to negotiate. A centralized team can ensure that surveys are effectively implemented and respond to changing service requirements, relieving frequently overburdened agency analytics teams. Second, ensuring a common platform for comparison catalyzes the usefulness of an agency survey by allowing for cross-agency benchmarking. Interagency comparisons rely upon a set of common measures, with data collected using consistent methodologies and under the same conditions and timeframe. Third, such an office can make choices that serve the public service as a whole, independent of any individual agency manager. For example, publishing data on all units, rather than selectively sharing results, ensures a more accurate representation of reality.
- When this central office does not have the capacity to address the demands of all managers in the public service, the case of the US federal government indicates that complementary efforts from individual officers strengthen the possibility that surveys incite public action. For example, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Employee Viewpoint Survey Analysis and Results Tool (EVS ART) has facilitated granular

analytics of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS), allowing managers across the public service to better understand the implications of the survey for their work.

## INTRODUCTION

Generating coherent survey data that describe the state of public administration is a vital foundation for inspiring effective reform of the public service. One of the best-known influential surveys of public officials is the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS), which is administered by the United States federal government's Office of Personnel Management (OPM).<sup>1</sup> The survey was first fielded in 2002 and has been repeated annually since 2011, generating a panel of agency- and unit-level variables including measures of employee engagement, satisfaction, welfare, cooperation, development, leadership, and performance management. Technically an organizational climate survey, it functions to “assess how employees jointly experience the policies, practices, and procedures characteristic of their agency and its leadership” (OPM 2022). FEVS data are made available to managers of units, and an aggregated and anonymized version of the data is made public.<sup>2</sup>

The continuous, comparable, and public nature of the FEVS data has been a boon to the United States government analysts and researchers alike. As Janelle Callahan (2015, 399) states, “Ten years ago, few in government were talking about what federal employees thought or how the survey information could be used to improve employee satisfaction and commitment, and the performance of federal agencies.” Various qualities of the FEVS have made it influential in debates within the federal government, Congress, and society more broadly. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) frequently uses FEVS data in its assessments of federal agencies.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, the Partnership for Public Service, a nonprofit organization focused on strengthening the US civil service, uses the FEVS to publish its Best Places to Work in the Federal Government index.<sup>4</sup> This index frequently stimulates substantial debate on the public service labor market and its relationship to analogous private sector jobs (see, for example, Brust 2021; Mullins 2021).<sup>5</sup>

The core purpose of the FEVS is to provide public sector managers with direct but anonymized feedback from employees on the “state” of their work units. This may be at the agency level or in teams as small as 10 people (it is FEVS policy not to release data on any subagency work units with fewer than 10 respondents in order to protect the identity of individuals). It provides managers with a snapshot of current strengths, opportunities for improvement, and challenges for the organizations they manage, as well as how these have changed since the last survey. As Theeve Gray of the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) stated in an interview for this chapter, “OPM FEVS has been a great tool to ensure everyone has the same collective information on what is happening in our agency—a great starting point.” The ability for staff to provide management with anonymous feedback about their current experience concerning their work, work environment, management, and leadership ensures a minimum floor of feedback across the federal government. While agencies have their own surveying efforts, the FEVS provides a consistent platform for comparison across time and agencies. In a setting like the public service, where benchmarks of the work environment in other offices provide a crucial complement to more objective but coarse measures, this is a powerful feature of the survey.

The FEVS team provides agency managers with summary results of FEVS data for their units, with some breakdown by demographics, and FEVS individual-level data are released publicly (though fully anonymized).<sup>6</sup> It does not typically provide custom analysis to individual managers. This is a product of the mismatch in the scale of the federal government and the size of the FEVS team—there is simply not enough capacity to provide full-service analytics on demand. This leaves most managers with rich but unstructured survey data to explore. Initiatives such as the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Employee Viewpoint Survey Analysis and Results Tool (EVS ART) have sprung up to support managers in analyzing

the data of particular interest to them. However, generating work-unit-focused or topic-specific knowledge from the FEVS requires an effort to engage with the data themselves, which may seem costly or to be a low priority.

Such data releases provide a platform for public service reform at all levels of government, helping managers to better understand the reality of their management approaches and helping agency heads—who often have relatively short tenures heading large and disparate agencies—to identify priorities for the organization as a whole. Agency responses to the FEVS interact with external stakeholders in three ways. First, agencies can quickly identify their relative performance in personnel management, communicate with and learn from more successful agencies, and feel implicit pressure from their public standing. Second, the OPM, Congress, and the White House can do the same. The GAO explicitly uses the FEVS to make recommendations to Congress about how agencies should be reformed. In both cases, agency managers may feel there are career consequences related to improving their standing in the FEVS.<sup>2</sup> Third, bodies outside the government can monitor the workings of the public service and make recommendations about how it should reform or provide inputs into the change and development process for individual agencies.

Simply producing rich survey data has rarely been sufficient to generate public sector action. Complementary efforts to stimulate the use of these data are vital for achieving corresponding change. This chapter argues that external factors and pressures play a secondary role compared to the internal architecture of an agency's response to the FEVS. The experience of the FEVS in its two-decade-long history is that, though external and internal pressures are highly complementary, three pillars of response are critical for the FEVS to induce public action. First, public action requires a technical expert who is capable of analyzing and interpreting the FEVS data and who has sufficient time and focus to understand the implications of the FEVS for an agency and its work units. The approach of these individuals to promoting, digesting, and translating the FEVS for their agencies has varied, but in all cases, these individuals have been committed to the FEVS as a key tool of management and agency betterment. They can be seen as the spark of public action at the agency level.

Second, the survey analyst must have a strong relationship with a senior leader of the agency who sees the value of and endorses the use of FEVS feedback to inform agency-specific development at all levels of the organization. This is often a frontline senior leader or an executive within an organization below the agency level. Broad change can certainly be initiated at higher levels, but real change must happen on the front lines to create sustained culture change. This “change champion” acts as a bridge between the technical translation of the FEVS into a form usable by an agency and the strategic processes required to build momentum for change. The relationship between the survey analyst and the change champion can be seen as the positive friction that turns the spark into a flame for effective organizational development, change, and, ultimately, public sector reform.

However, without the broader buy-in of agency supervisors and staff working within a culture of responsiveness, such efforts are likely to be in vain. This buy-in begins at the initiation of the survey. If few staff respond to the FEVS, the data will not be seen as representative of broader staff concerns. Similarly, if staff do not believe that management will use their feedback to create change, they will not take the survey seriously. Thus, the credibility of FEVS data as a management tool requires a belief that they will indeed be used as a management tool. Once the data are published, agency change and development initiatives stemming from the FEVS currently require a coproduction approach, with both managers and staff moving toward improvements. For example, if staff feel that their capacity to perform is not being sufficiently developed, management must make opportunities for capacity development available and feasible to take up, and staff must take those opportunities and put in the effort required for learning. A culture of survey-informed action at the agency level is the tinder and kindling of public action.

Where these pillars of action have been in place, the FEVS has become a central pillar of personnel management in the US federal government. Callahan (2015, 399) provides the following example:

The Department of Commerce had [FEVS] subcomponents with the highest employee satisfaction in government and the lowest in 2013, prompting leaders to ask what was going

on and to take action. The U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) was the number one agency of 300 subcomponents regarding employee satisfaction and commitment, while the Economic Development Administration (EDA), also in Commerce, ranked last. EDA officials said they began consulting with the USPTO and other organizations to gather best practices and work on improving employee satisfaction. In 2014, EDA was the most improved subcomponent, raising its satisfaction score by 11.8 points.

This chapter aims to describe the enabling environments within the US federal government that have been most prevalent in the translation of FEVS results into changes to the way public administration functions. It begins with a discussion of the key uses of public employee surveys through the lens of the use of the FEVS and then presents an overview of experiences using FEVS data and results for public action that stresses the three features of agency environments outlined above that have led to policy changes and improvements in government administration. The arguments presented here are based on the experiences of the authors—many of whom have played a key role in the development of the FEVS or its translation and use at the agency level over the past decade—and interviews with key stakeholders from across the US federal government.

## THE USES OF SURVEYS OF PUBLIC OFFICIALS

Most surveys of public sector employees intend to improve the quality of the environment in which they work and the processes that they undertake. In turn, work environment or process improvements are intended to improve the actions of the public sector toward the better delivery of public services. While some surveys target aspects of public administration that have direct impacts on service delivery, their intention is frequently the improvement of the administrative environment itself.

As such, survey content typically focuses on aspects of the administration that are widely regarded as meaningful for the quality of the work environment or administrative processes. The features of the work environment a survey assesses will directly determine the potential uses of its results. To have the best chance of informing or inducing reform of the public service, surveys should be designed with a theory of policy influence in mind.<sup>8</sup>

One use of survey results is as a centralized monitoring tool. A centralized personnel management agency may want to track the motivation of employees across the public service to ensure they are being effectively managed by senior leadership. The FEVS was initially implemented after an act of Congress required each agency to survey its employees annually.<sup>9</sup> The act required the collection of perceptions of leadership practices contributing to agency performance, employee satisfaction with policies and practices, work environment, rewards and recognition, professional development and growth opportunities, and organizational mission supports. The required content is included in the FEVS, so agency participation in the survey satisfies their statutory requirements. Incentivizing agency participation in a governmentwide survey also provides leadership with data for shaping policies intended to support federal employees.

The content of such centralized, standardized monitoring surveys will necessarily focus on aspects of administration that are said to be of importance to the quality of the work environment generally. Agencies and units can then be assessed against each other for comparison across the public service. Centralized stakeholders, including oversight entities, such as Congress, can use relative performance on survey measures to identify the worst-performing agencies in a particular area or to identify areas of strength and needs for improvement for individual—or even all—agencies.

For example, after a series of reports and internal surveys identified systemic problems in several national parks in 2016, congressional hearings were held on misconduct and mismanagement in the public service.<sup>10</sup> The agency responded with a range of reforms, including complementing the FEVS with a series of new pulse surveys.<sup>11</sup> The Department of the Interior now uses agency-specific items on the FEVS to monitor

agency reforms related to anti-harassment training and employees' knowledge of their rights and resources related to harassment.

Second, surveys of public officials can be used as a tool for agency personnel management. Without having to rely on centralized intervention or coordination, agency or unit managers can undertake their own assessments of their agencies' work environments. If a survey intends to improve agency management, it will naturally focus on elements of the work environment most relevant to its mission. Some of these elements will overlap with the wider service, but others will deviate. Here lies a key tension of centralized surveys of public employees—between the need for comparability and central control over the focus of the questionnaire, on the one hand, and the contemporary requirements of specific agencies, on the other.<sup>12</sup>

Comparability allows managers to use common benchmarks to better understand where they are performing well or poorly. But if comparability is focused on measures that are not relevant to their current concerns, the value of centralized surveys falls. Within the framework of a standardized survey, the FEVS has looked to counter this by providing agency managers with tailored insights, as resource constraints allow. In 2012, as the utility of providing agencies and units with survey results directly became clear, a series of initiatives were undertaken by the OPM to provide work-unit-level data. The OPM intended to empower agency heads and managers to capitalize on it as a tool for the agency. As the OPM (2012) stated,

Working with the information from the survey, ... an agency can make a thorough assessment of its own progress in its strategic goals and develop a plan of action for further improvement. The OPM FEVS findings allow agencies to assess progress by comparing earlier results with [contemporary] results, to compare agency results with the Governmentwide results, to identify current strengths and challenges, and to focus on short-term and longer-term action targets that will help agencies reach their strategic human capital management goals.

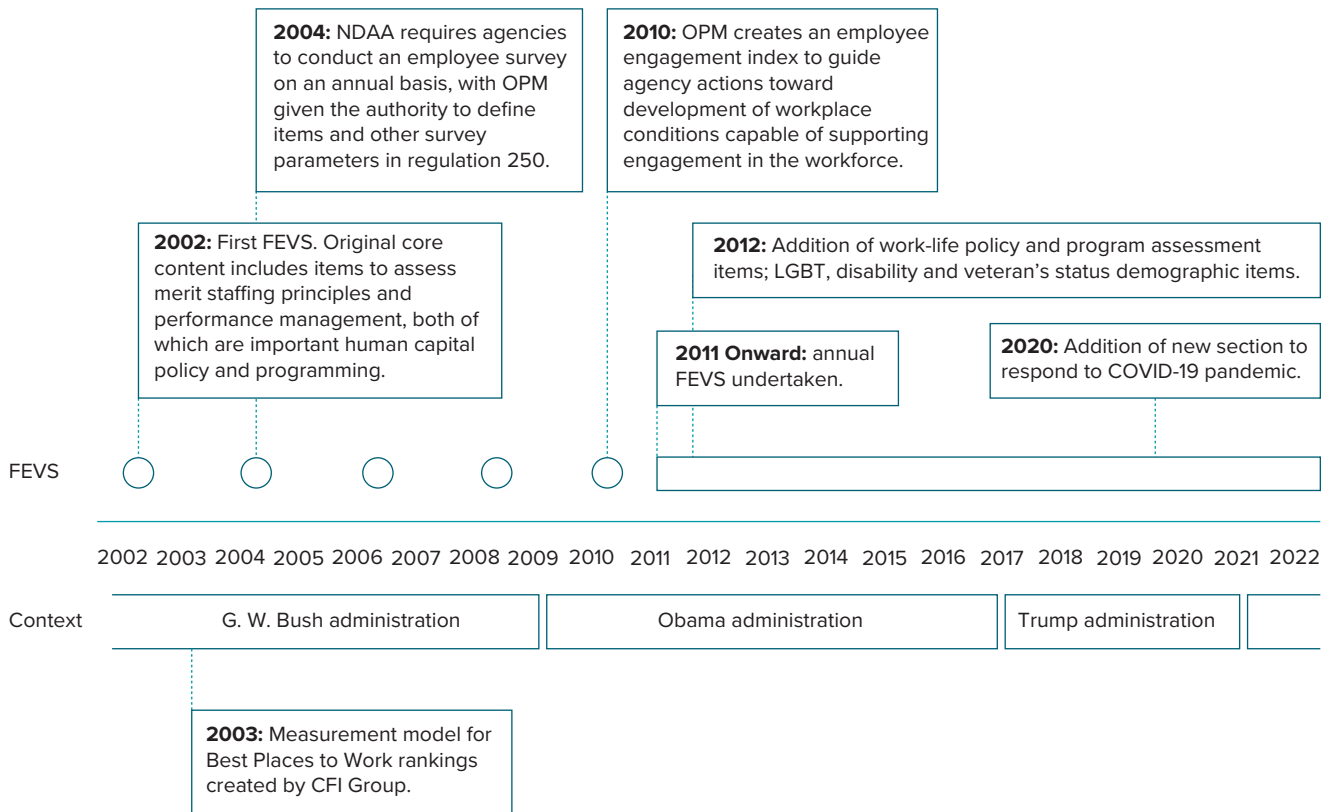
Third, data from public employee surveys can be used as a tool for ensuring the accountability of the government to citizens. In this case, citizens may be less interested in how satisfied or motivated public employees are but more interested in whether they are undertaking their jobs effectively and ensuring the judicious and efficient use of public funds. This implies a third realm of focus for public action to which survey questions may be targeted. Since 2012, the OPM has released anonymized data at the individual level. This has allowed analysts, researchers, the media, and the public to explore the world of the federal government in an unprecedented way.

Figure 26.1 summarizes the use of the FEVS across these three realms over time. The FEVS has at once been an oversight tool for Congress, a key resource for the GAO's large-scale evaluations of government, a means by which the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) can support broad agency functioning, and a rich resource for agencies to use as a core management tool. Each of these drivers of public action has matured and evolved toward an increasingly valuable architecture for the FEVS to impact government functions. These uses of the FEVS have co-evolved, and agency-level responses to the FEVS have been a critical complement to governmentwide policy and program assessments.<sup>13</sup>

The unifying theme of interest across varying federal government stakeholders is organizational effectiveness and performance. In particular, officials must make informed decisions or recommendations, interact with other members of the public service, and effectively deliver their mission to other members of government or the public. Succeeding at these tasks requires sufficient performance. The FEVS is designed as an organizational climate survey—a type of employee survey typically utilized to support organizational change and development initiatives.<sup>14</sup> Climate surveys collect employees' perceptions of management policies and practices, perceptions shown over decades of research to relate to performance. Moreover, employee input on policy enactment provides valuable data for assessing the function of those policies and ensuing practices, serving to guide effective change.

The FEVS contains several variables shown by research to relate to performance. Following an extensive body of research demonstrating the importance of employee engagement to performance, in 2010, the FEVS team introduced an employee engagement index (EEI) (see figure 26.1) that brought together those survey

**FIGURE 26.1** Timeline of the Evolution of the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey



Source: Original figure for this publication.

Note: CFI = Claes Fornell International; FEVS = Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey; LGBT = lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender; NDAA = National Defense Authorization Act; OPM = Office of Personnel Management.

questions related to different aspects of employee engagement. The EEI was subsequently featured in the President’s Management Agenda (PMA) and, accordingly, became a focus for agency change and development initiatives and a central part of the FEVS team’s reporting and dissemination efforts.

Importantly, the FEVS EEI measures conditions that can lead to the state of engagement. The 15 EEI questions do not directly measure employees’ feelings of engagement but rather assess conditions conducive to engagement (for example, effective leadership, meaningful work, and learning and growth opportunities), in keeping with the frame appropriate to an organizational climate survey. Understanding the engagement potential of federal workplaces along the factors of the measure enables one to identify leverage points for developing and sustaining work conditions capable of supporting employee engagement and, consequently, performance. These work conditions can be targeted for reform and provide policy-relevant variables for data collection. With a common measure, offices undertaking centralized monitoring can search for service-wide engagement trends and for work units that are falling behind others in terms of engagement. Agency managers can work to resolve issues with work conditions flagged by surveys, and stakeholders outside of government can monitor the health of their public service through the engagement of public employees.

The legislative foundation of the FEVS questions has limited change in the survey’s content over time, although as figure 26.1 points out, changes have been made. Recently, the regulation governing content has been revised, with the number of required questions being reduced from 45 to 16. With this change, an FEVS modernization initiative has resulted in the addition of new content meant to respond to federal government priorities (for example, Executive Order 14035: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workplace) and advances in contemporary management theory and research (for example, innovation and organizational resilience).

A major goal for the entire FEVS program is to respond to evolving conditions and priorities. When the public service as a whole faced a significant new challenge, the FEVS responded rapidly. An entirely new and substantial section was added to the survey—for the first time since the development of the FEVS nearly two decades ago—due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Given the nature of the FEVS, OPM leadership felt such an addition would be particularly appropriate to understanding the implications of changes made to governmentwide and agency management practices and policies addressing pandemic challenges. The addition of items to assess responses to the pandemic has given the survey another layer of utility, with results critical to determine responses to future emergencies and inform ongoing discussions about the future of work.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF THE INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT

FEVS data have provided a window into the public administration of the US federal government. In contrast to many stereotypes of a monolithic bureaucracy, the experience of working in government is hugely diverse. Figure 26.2 presents the EEI across agencies (the solid squares) for 2018. As can be seen, there are substantial differences in how employees across the government perceive the engagement potential of their agencies. This point is amplified by looking at work units within agencies. Stacked vertically around each agency mean are the scores of the departments/work units (level 1) within that agency. In many agencies, we see that EEI scores can range as widely as they do across the public service as a whole.

Variation across and within agencies is a core reason why the institutional environment of an agency or department is so critical in generating public sector reform. The problems facing individual organizations will differ, requiring an organization- or work-unit-specific response that can only be generated if that organization has the right architecture in place to identify problems and build momentum for solutions. The fact that such variation is found in teams with similar budgets, jobs, senior leadership, and history indicates that differences in employee engagement are likely to have unique causes that require specific attention within the organization.

**FIGURE 26.2** Variation across and within Agencies in the Employee Engagement Index



Source: Original figure for this publication based on the FEVS 2019 public data.

Note: Solid squares represent agencies, and dots are scores for department or work units within that agency. FEVS = Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey.



Variation is also at the core of why survey data are so powerful. Rather than making policies based on the general experience of government (perhaps best represented in figure 26.2 by the governmentwide mean), policies can be targeted at those agencies and departments that are most in need. And lessons can be learned from those that are most successful. Thus, the FEVS aims to improve the quality of the management and work environment across agencies and departments by collecting individual employees' perceptions and experiences of their workplaces.

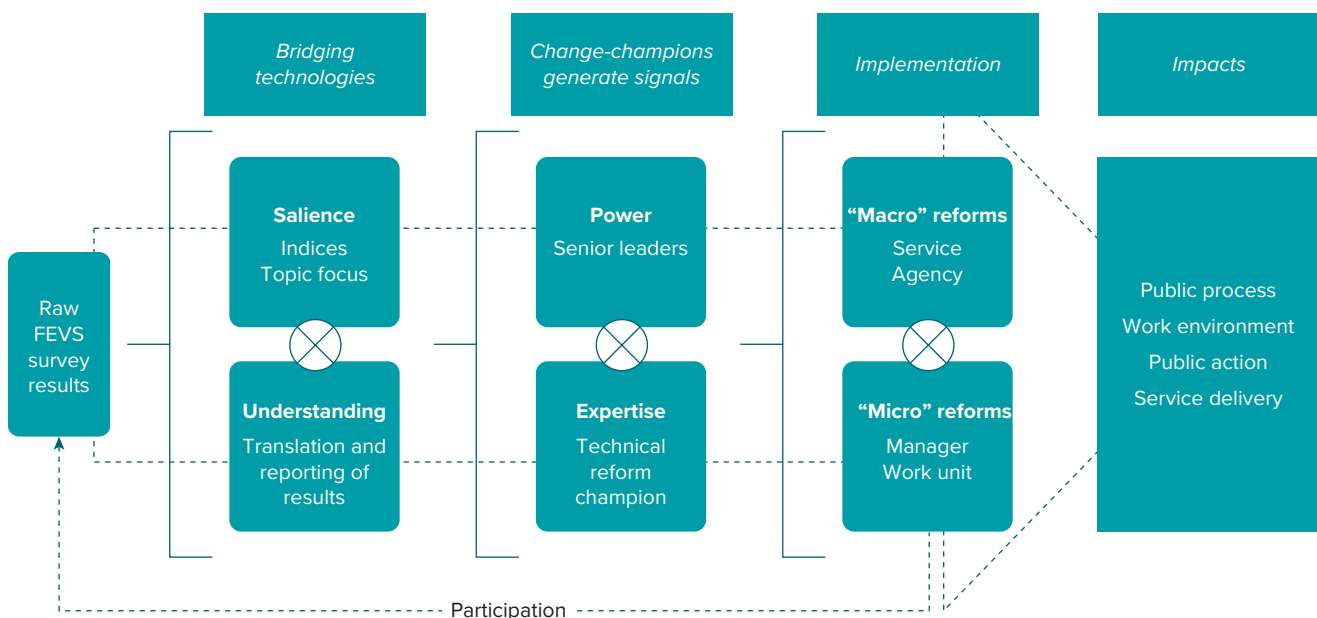
After 20 years of evolution, the FEVS is now built on an increasingly rich institutional scaffold that encompasses statutory requirements for surveying, reporting tools, and centralized initiatives that focus on the weakest performers, as defined by FEVS-based indexes. In many agencies, there are complementary scaffolds that support agency responses to FEVS results, either in reaction to centralized monitoring or as part of an agency-based reform initiative.

The evolutionary process that has occurred in the US federal government has guided agencies toward a structure with a series of key features. Figure 26.3 articulates these features as follows. The first column shows how raw FEVS results require a bridge into the agency where they are translated and their ramifications understood. Given the number of work units in most agencies and the number of questions in the FEVS, the potential complexity of reporting is substantial. Some topics must be made salient, requiring the survey analyst within the agency to appreciate where there is scope for reform and how the survey results might interact with those issues.

That iterative process of mapping results to areas of agency work is not done by the survey analyst alone but happens in collaboration with a senior "change champion." In the second column of figure 26.3, we see how the interaction between *power* and *expertise* within the agency generates the momentum for change, or at least signals it to the wider agency. In the third stage, proposed reforms must be implemented either at a *macro* level, across the public service or agency, or at a *micro* level, by a manager for, perhaps, a single work unit. For many reforms of the public service, a quorum of agency staff must accept the change and invest effort to shift to the new way of working. Together, these columns make up the architecture for impact on public processes, the quality of the work environment, and, eventually, the quality of services delivered.

This static exposition ignores the dynamic nature of these elements. As agency officials observe reactions to the FEVS survey results, the survey itself gains credibility, leading to greater participation in the survey.

**FIGURE 26.3** The Architecture of Policy Action for the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey



Source: Original figure for this publication.  
 Note: FEVS = Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey.

Greater participation, in turn, makes results more representative of the underlying issues, which, in turn, leads to more relevant reform approaches, increasing the credibility of the wider process. In this way, a virtuous circle can be formed. As Tracey Hilliard of the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) stated in an interview for this chapter, “Once everyone responds, more managers get [results specific to their work unit], and this ensures problems are less likely to be hidden in averages—a manager can tell what their particular issues are.”

These elements are all necessary to an agency architecture for inducing public action from FEVS raw data. Once these structures are in place, managers receive feedback on their performance and know that senior management is knowledgeable about the areas in which they need to improve. This creates accountability, communication, and a shared understanding for change.

## TRANSLATION OF SURVEY RESULTS THROUGH TECHNICAL EXPERTISE

The FEVS contains a substantial amount of information. For each respondent, there are roughly 85 questions/items (depending on the specific survey, with length varying by year and the track respondents follow). These questions can be assessed by a wide range of groupings, compared to previous years’ trends, or benchmarked against the dynamics of similar variables and groups. Each of these cuts of data can be made for each work unit or aggregated to the departmental, agency, and service levels. For this reason, the potential complexity of analyzing the FEVS is significant.

Similarly, although FEVS results are presented to senior managers in a series of high-level reports, they are also released in a relatively unstructured form to ensure maximum flexibility for managers to analyze those issues most relevant to their teams. As noted above, trying to provide managers with flexibility is one way the FEVS tries to be useful to a diverse public administration. But this confronts managers—many of whom do not have any background in survey data analysis—with the demanding task of making sense of rich but complicated data. That task must fit into their wider work of managing a work unit and undertaking their own portfolio of activities. Frequently, this combination of complexity and constraint prevents managers from fully engaging with the FEVS data. As Stephen Pellegrino of the US Department of Energy stated in an interview for this chapter, “We get a lot of data from OPM, and managers are not going to tease out what is relevant to them.”

Having a colleague whose work program includes time to undertake analysis of the FEVS data and who can identify their relevance for a work unit overcomes the first bottleneck to using the survey to generate reform. Simply having someone who can “translate” the data into practical issues for specific managers ensures the data have meaning for all officials, irrespective of their previous training and inclinations. Mr. Pellegrino noted that he provides his colleagues with simplified answers to the questions they have about the FEVS and only delves into greater detail on methodology for those who request it. As he frames it, “When you get down to a granular level, the statistics don’t matter as much as the story.”

This is particularly true for more senior members of the administration. As Gonzalo Ferro of the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) argued in an interview, “There is a need to help leaders understand the OPM FEVS data for their organization.” For Mr. Ferro, this includes developing data visualizations (such as trend graphs and heat maps) that help managers make sense of the FEVS quickly and efficiently. “At the SEC,” Mr. Ferro reported, “we built a dashboard that makes all of our OPM FEVS data (from 2012 to present) accessible to all of our employees.”

Having a “technical expert” translate and report the results also consolidates the effort to engage with the FEVS at the agency. Potentially, this makes the analysis of the survey more efficient compared with having each manager do complementary work themselves. Such a survey analyst, aware of the priorities and issues of the organization they work for, may also be able to make salient results that speak to priorities. They can link the results to discussions throughout the organization.

In an interview for this chapter, Thevee Gray of the USDA expressed, “For strategic and effective change to happen, it’s important to know how to bridge the gap between the current state and our desired vision. That’s when the survey data plays an important role. It’s vital to know how to interpret the information, understand the culture and speak to both the grassroots and upper management.” In her experience analyzing FEVS data, while a survey expert is critical, so are the data. She continued,

My team and I leverage the FEVS data to help shine the light on issues within an organization and help managers recognize the importance of understanding the collective feedback from their employees. We presented an activity with them where we wrote on a board what they believed they were doing well and then showed them the FEVS data. It was an “aha” moment for all of them. The challenges they identified were completely opposite from employees’ perspective. If we don’t have this data to help guide them, management would focus on completely different issues. They would not be able to effectively close the gaps, wonder why the challenges remain and the needle has not moved in a positive direction.

Additionally, survey results are vital because they provide statistically valid information about what employees think. However, I always share with leadership to probe for what lies behind the survey results. Because as you analyze the data, it doesn’t explain why employees respond to questions as they do, and the reasons will not always be clear. This is why, when assessing the state of organization, the survey data should be used in conjunction with other information.

Ms. Gray worked for the USDA Farm Service Agency, and her work there provides an example of an agencywide initiative arising from the FEVS results. She used the FEVS analysis to identify staff recognition as an area of the work environment that was particularly challenging throughout the organization. Through a series of focus groups and managerial briefings, she and the wider agency came up with a system of celebratory coins themed with harvest-related features. Though the “USDA is not a coin culture—that comes from the military,” it worked effectively in giving managers a low-cost way to recognize excellence within their work units.

Similarly, Tracey Hilliard of HHS argued that it is important to have someone who can work with and interpret the FEVS data at the organizational level: “[The HHS Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] has 10,000 employees, so we created coordinators—two people in each organization that are a point of contact and can interpret the data. They came to meetings twice a month and helped get the data out to the managers to help translation.”

## PARTNERSHIPS FOR POLICY ACTION

In most hierarchical organizations—which, arguably, most agencies of the US federal government are—expertise in FEVS data analytics is not enough to generate change. To generate change, leaders must appreciate the validity and importance of feedback and use this information to make informed strategic decisions, including providing the necessary resources to affect change. In all of the interviews undertaken for this chapter, and in the broader experience of the FEVS team, change has always required buy-in from senior management and the supervisor of the organization. Without buy-in, power will be a bottleneck rather than an enabler. When discussing her experience of trying to generate responses to FEVS results, Thevee Gray argued that “the leadership buy-in was crucial to help shift the needle in a positive direction ... Once you have their buy-in, that cascades through the organization.”

As Ms. Gray pointed out earlier, without the FEVS as a diagnostic tool, management might not tackle the right work environment issues. Thus, in figure 26.3, change arises from the interaction between the survey analyst and the senior manager rather than from the manager alone. Tracey Hilliard suggests, “The survey

didn't change the organization; the leadership did, but they used the survey as their vehicle." As reflected in many of our interviews, the FEVS data do indeed seem to provide managers with new insights into their strengths and weaknesses and the current environment of their work units. Though this was reported to be truer for less-experienced managers and those with some of the worst results, the FEVS was felt to be instructive in general. It is interesting to note that in figure 26.2, those agencies with higher overall engagement scores are also those with the lowest variation in engagement across work units. This is consistent with the idea that agencies in which management has taken engagement seriously ensure that engagement is consistently addressed across the agency.

Once management begins to respond, the FEVS ensures a feedback loop is built into any reform program so that management can continue to measure their success in making relevant changes in the years following reform efforts. Increasingly, over the past 20 years, the FEVS has become the federal government management's tool for getting feedback on the current state of the administration, allowing those who are implementing reforms to course-correct their efforts. And as more senior managers understand the value of the FEVS as a management tool, the peer pressure on the wider cadre of management increases. The front-line supervisor must also understand the value of the FEVS analysis and be the accountable party to take the necessary next steps for reform. Correspondingly, the demand for survey analysts who can support the increased demand for FEVS analytics also increases.

The FEVS enables the team of the survey analyst and the change champion to develop appropriate reforms beyond just ensuring reforms are informed by the survey. The relationship between the survey analyst and the senior manager ensures reforms are based on evidence, but conversely, the FEVS data and evidence make that relationship possible. Stephen Pellegrino points out that without the FEVS data, a survey analyst may not be able to have conversations about areas of weakness with staff and managers across the organization. He suggests that "it's an easy way to start difficult discussions that are otherwise challenging to have—it's the data."

Once a formal position, team, or office is set up to process the FEVS data, it supports the further strengthening of the relationship with senior management. Like in any administration, having an office and personnel dedicated to a topic—in this case, the analysis of the FEVS—increases the salience and acceptability of a message. Karlease Kelly, formerly of the USDA, has presented across the US public service about the idea that consistently reporting FEVS results to managers makes them increasingly likely to accept the results and associated recommendations. The architecture becomes strengthened over time as managers come to view the FEVS as a standard part of their management approach.

## **GENERATING A CULTURE OF CREDIBILITY AND RESPONSIVENESS**

If the survey analyst provides the spark from the FEVS, and the relationship between the analyst and senior management is the positive friction that turns the spark into a flame for reform, there must be tinder and kindling for public action. Perhaps the key bottleneck to the use of results is the cultural resistance that agencies can have toward capitalizing on diagnostic data, such as the FEVS. The agencies that have been the most successful in using the FEVS for policy action have been those that have created a culture of using the FEVS across the entire staff to complement the basic scaffolding outlined above.

Without the cooperation and effort of the wider body of staff at an agency, any public action is unlikely to succeed. Thus, staff must feel that their efforts—to fill in the survey or support a reform—will be rewarded in some way. This can include simply fulfilling a norm that they expect to fulfill and that they expect others will also conform to. A strong FEVS-based reform culture is one in which all staff members believe that it is the norm to fill in the FEVS, to expect that its results will be responded to by senior management, and to agree that whatever change comes should be adhered to by all staff.

In part, such a culture requires the process of reform to be inclusive. Where cultures of FEVS-based reform have been built, FEVS results and identified focus areas were shared with staff, who were invited to

talk about them openly and often in a variety of venues. These meetings were community focused, diverse, and respectful. The FEVS was not presented as a report card but as a platform for discussion about where to go next. Once challenges were identified and generally agreed upon, staff were involved in changes in a positive way, such as through professional development opportunities. Reform leadership opportunities were created for those with a passion for the subject matter at hand to help lead projects, initiatives, and trainings that had been identified as necessary. A culture of responsiveness to the FEVS has arisen, in part, from credibility built over time. Once the relevant survey analyst and both senior management and frontline supervisors articulated to staff the results and what actions would be taken in response, it often took time for staff to believe this would be a systematic approach. Staff belief in action sometimes took years to develop.

The National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK) provides an example of how an agency has transformed its work environment by focusing on building a culture of responsiveness to FEVS results. In 2015 and 2016, the NIDDK was scoring toward the middle of the distribution of agencies in its sector. Though it was not one of the overall laggards, its senior leadership wanted it to become a stronger and more effective agency. They focused on key themes coming out of the FEVS and created a campaign based around the motto “You speak, we listen, things happen.”

The NIDDK formulated an approach based on three principles: share FEVS results and analysis broadly and continuously throughout the year, meet with subgroups to better understand their perspectives and feedback, and undertake focus groups and listening sessions to continue the conversation on FEVS results. The FEVS was no longer viewed as a report card looking backward but, instead, as a launchpad for robust conversation moving forward. A clear outreach strategy was combined with regular reporting on how challenges were being targeted. Actions taken by the agency were communicated and tied back to the FEVS results and, more specifically, to “the voice of the people.” Thus, NIDDK staff were given clear signals that senior managers had taken the FEVS seriously and were trying to improve the work environment in response.

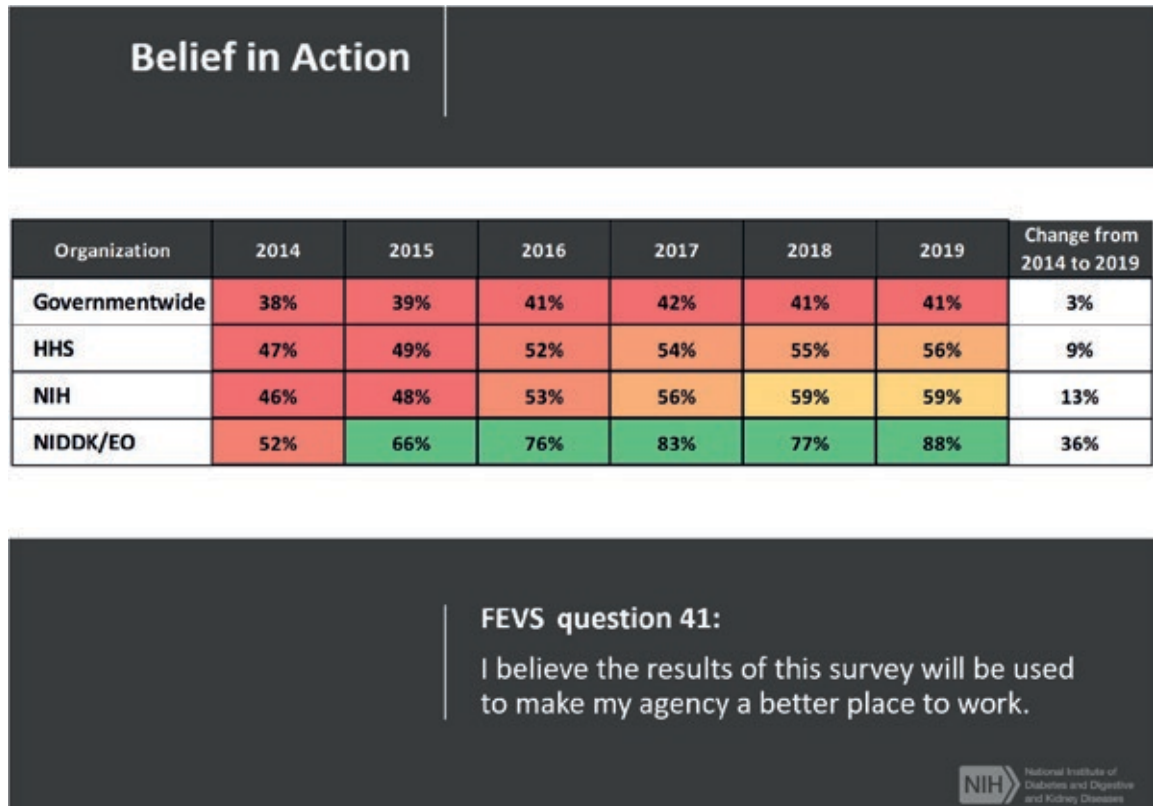
Staff confidence in the efficacy of the FEVS as a management tool grew, and figure 26.4 illustrates the difference this approach made. The figure shows the NIDDK’s trajectory of positive responses to the FEVS item “I believe the results of this survey will be used to make my agency a better place to work.” In contrast to little change in the government as a whole, the NIDDK’s trajectory was substantially positive, changing over 20 percentage points between 2014 and 2019. This also equated to increased survey participation, which climbed from 37 percent in 2014 to 69 percent in 2019, providing even more data for decision-making. Comparator scores are provided for the NIH and for HHS as a whole.

The NIDDK’s increased positive scores related to poor performance are also remarkable and are related to putting both standards and accountabilities into place, in addition to several targeted interventions. Figure 26.5 shows the NIDDK’s results for one of the lowest-scoring questions across the federal government: “In my work unit, steps are taken to deal with poor performers.” In 2015 and 2016, the NIDDK’s results were stagnant, like those of the government and the NIH as a whole. However, with the initiation of strategic initiatives and increased transparency through the launch of the “You speak, we listen, things happen” campaign in 2017, the proportion of positive responses jumped and continued to climb in the following years, indicating an increase in employees’ positive perception of how their agency dealt with poor performers. The NIDDK, using an architecture representative of that outlined in figure 26.3, successfully transformed its staff’s perception of accountability at the organization.

The strategic use of the FEVS has created a ripple effect throughout the institute. As of the 2020 FEVS cycle, the NIDDK’s cumulative scores in the areas of employee engagement, global satisfaction, and “leaders lead” were the highest across all 28 NIH institutes and centers, with positive percentage scores of 91 percent, 88 percent, and 90 percent, respectively.

In some ways, the actions undertaken at the NIDDK increasingly echo across the federal government. Using the FEVS as a critical management tool is becoming the norm, and cultures like the NIDDK’s are being built more widely. This is partly because the culture of the entire public service is being changed by the FEVS. Once disaggregated FEVS results were shared publicly and members of the government and the

**FIGURE 26.4** National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases Staff Responses to Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey “Belief in Action” Question Compared to Organization-Level and Governmentwide Responses



Source: Screenshot of the National Institutes of Health’s FEVS dashboard.

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.

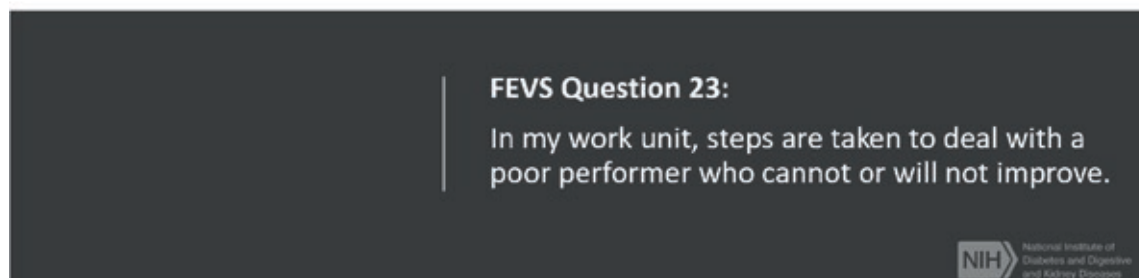
public were able to analyze the raw data by work unit, problem areas in the public service were increasingly difficult to hide within broader averages. This increased peer pressure on managers and changed the nature of recruitment because the quality of the workplace became more transparent. The FEVS data thus generated pressure from within and from outside organizations, making senior leaders more likely to pay attention to its findings.

In contrast to the “top-down” culture change process outlined so far, there are examples of “bottom-up” efforts to build responsiveness to FEVS results. Even when senior management fails to respond to the FEVS, public officials still want to use it as a tool to highlight problems in their organizations. These federal employees may have a passion for improving employee engagement for the benefit of staff and to better support their organizations’ missions, or they may want to improve their own work environments and see the FEVS as a tool to do so. In either case, the FEVS provides them with the ability to draw attention to needs, obtain buy-in for proposals, and measure the impact of the work being done.

A constraint to building a “bottom-up” culture for the use of the FEVS is the ability to communicate throughout an organization. There are often significant hurdles to frontline staff’s agreeing on the key issues presented in the FEVS data and generating a strategy in response. One such issue is the diversity of challenges faced within a single agency, as illustrated in figure 26.2. Thus, at least to date, much of the culture change around the use of the FEVS has arisen from the actions of survey analysts and senior management.

**FIGURE 26.5** National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases Staff Responses to Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey “Accountability” Question Compared to Organization-Level and Governmentwide Responses

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%



Source: Screenshot of the National Institutes of Health's FEVS dashboard.

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.

## THE FEVS IN A WIDER ORGANIZATIONAL AND SOCIETAL ENVIRONMENT

The evolution of the FEVS as a tool for public action at the agency level has interacted significantly with the wider organizational and societal environment of public service. Centralized initiatives have driven agencies to better understand and value the survey as a management tool. Grassroots initiatives have generated novel insights and created a community of users. And external actors have supported the development of reform initiatives by presenting the FEVS data through new lenses. This section paints a picture of some of the most influential aspects of the broader environment in which agencies have worked.

### Influencing from the Center

Senior leaders are most likely to seek out the sorts of relationships with survey analysts that drive effective reform when they are told to do so from the president's office. In 2014, the FEVS became a part of the PMA and was added to leadership performance plans. This grabbed the attention of any senior manager who had not yet taken their FEVS results seriously and gave the FEVS a stronger accountability role. The PMA also encouraged senior managers to learn from agencies that had been the most successful in

developing a quality work environment and personnel management. An initiative collected successful workforce practices from across the federal government and created a platform to share them broadly. As a result, federal leaders, supervisors, and human resources practitioners can now easily review, evaluate, and adopt—or adapt—these proven successful practices with minimal effort. Appendix M.1 provides screenshots from the website.<sup>15</sup>

In a similar vein, the OPM has tried to collate best practices from across the public service so that when agencies determine that they want to improve in a particular area, they have resources to turn to. Appendix M showcases a screenshot of the OPM’s “Successful Workforce Practices” webpage that links to the resources outlined in appendix M.2, as well as other resources. The intention is thus to provide learning resources as well as accountability.

Such initiatives clearly complement agency-specific efforts to respond to the FEVS results. By increasing the salience of and incentives for responding to issues highlighted in the FEVS, the center makes senior officials more likely to set up an architecture like that outlined in figure 26.3. The learning resources provide a menu of options for responding to identified issues.

Much of this thinking was brought together by the “20-20-20 initiative.” The effort, a pillar of President Donald Trump’s first PMA, took aim at the lowest-performing work units in an agency. Trends had shown that while the entire government was improving, these units were falling even further behind. Notably, no one at the leadership level was responsible for focusing on these units. With the culture change now firmly in place, the goal was to improve the lowest 20 percent of an agency’s work units by 20 percent by 2020.

## Influencing across Agencies

Centralized initiatives to share best practices suffer from many of the same issues as centralized surveys. Topics, best-practice methods, and recommendations are all chosen at the center. But cross-agency collaboration and learning in the face of FEVS results have only grown over the past two decades. This learning is related to the facilitation and analysis of the FEVS as well as potential practices that could be put in place to address challenges identified by the survey.

One example of how agencies have tried to support one another in analyzing and responding to FEVS data is the Employee Viewpoint Survey Analysis and Results Tool (EVS ART).<sup>16</sup> In 2015, a small team at the NIH and the NIDDK worked to create a framework that would allow users to translate the enormous amount of survey data they received from the FEVS in a user-friendly and efficient manner. In many ways, it made the task of the first column of figure 26.3 easier by expanding the set of individuals who could undertake that role and potentially widening the number of managers able to analyze FEVS data themselves.

The resulting Excel-based tool, EVS ART, has provided officials across the government with a no-cost, practical, and easy-to-use resource that allows for the easy identification of focus areas with substantial time and cost savings. The team has gifted EVS ART governmentwide, with no usage or licensing fees, and has provided training and support for using it. This has helped to eliminate the duplication of effort because agencies and supervisors no longer need to conduct supplemental analysis. With a simple “copy and paste” motion, EVS ART takes employees’ FEVS feedback and—through a series of hidden pivot tables—translates it into the index measures supplied by the OPM (see screenshots of EVS ART in appendix M.3).

EVS ART contributed to solving two problems. First, it gave survey analysts and the wider community interested in analyzing FEVS data a handy tool for analysis. This reduced the time and cost required to produce disaggregated reports. Second, it showcased the use of the FEVS by other agencies, raising the survey’s profile as a management tool. EVS ART has been generally well received across the public service. As Tracey Hilliard states, “When EVS ART came out, that was wonderful.” It is an example of how grassroots action can complement agency efforts. However, EVS ART is only part of the wider architecture we have outlined, not a substitute for it.



## Influencing from beyond the Public Service

Finally, as hinted at above, external stakeholders have played a role in the development of the FEVS as a tool for public action. Simply by expecting the government to become more analytical, external stakeholders can put pressure on the government to use the FEVS as a tool. However, such an abstract approach is unlikely to gain traction. Instead, most external stakeholders have used the data to draw out interesting perspectives regarding public service that have influenced the debate inside the government about priorities for reform.

The most famous example of this approach is the Partnership for Public Service's Best Places to Work in the Federal Government index. The index ranks government organizations based on FEVS data in terms of the quality of the experience of working for them. As an example of how influential the index was, the December 2015 edition of *MyUSDA: A Progress Report for Employees on USDA's Cultural Transformation* was headlined "USDA Moves Up in Best Places to Work Ranking."

The Best Places to Work index uses a simple idea to motivate agencies to improve their rankings. Agency staff may feel motivated by a desire for their agency to look better in the rankings or to improve the talent pool that seeks employment at the organization. The index brings what is a relatively dry personnel issue in the public sector into the public sphere. Thevee Gray feels that:

the Partnership for Public Service has assisted in gaining the necessary attention for the FEVS. Senior leadership desires for their agencies to be seen as one of the best places to work in the government. As such, it holds them accountable and increases their responsibility to take the FEVS results seriously, knowing they will be published in an influential index and debated publicly.

## CONCLUSION

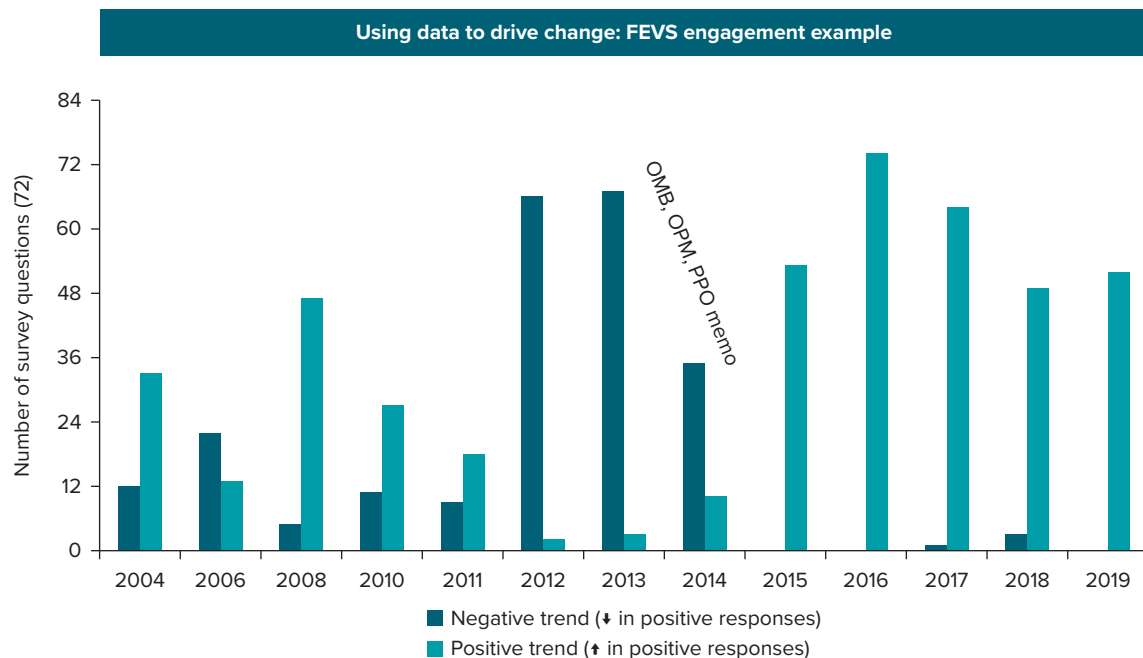
This chapter has argued for the potential power of surveys of public employees for driving public sector reform and improvement in the functioning of government. But it has cautioned that surveys must be embedded within a wider architecture of policy action for impacts to be realized. This architecture requires that a public sector organization have an official capable of translating survey results into actionable advice that a senior manager, working closely with that official, can use to build momentum for reform. And it requires responsiveness to survey results to build a culture that induces wider agency staff to contribute to reform.

Evidence for the arguments laid out in this chapter can be found in a 2014 joint memo from the Executive Office of the President and the OPM (Donovan et al. 2014). In many ways, its guidance closely tracks the arguments made here. After noticing that early adopters, like the Department of Transportation and the Federal Labor Relations Authority, demonstrated rapid improvement in their FEVS scores because of dedicated effort from their senior leaders, the OMB determined that the FEVS and employee engagement deserved elevation as a cross-agency priority goal in the PMA. A joint memorandum signed by OMB, OPM, and White House Presidential Personnel Office leadership with the subject line "Strengthening Employee Engagement and Organization Performance" laid out explicit mandates to agencies that echo the arguments of this paper.

Notably, each agency's career and noncareer leadership needed to take responsibility for changing how they had previously responded or, more realistically, did not respond to employee feedback. For two years after 2014, agencies had senior accountable officials and full-time staff dedicated to analyzing results and creating immediate action plans. The OMB included the results in the "FedStat" meetings held at senior levels as well as in reports to senior White House officials and directly to President Barack Obama.

The results from this effort were quickly apparent in the FEVS data themselves. Whereas the broad trend between 2012 and 2014 had been a declining number of positive responses to the FEVS questions,

**FIGURE 26.6 Trends in Negative and Positive Responses to Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey Questions, 2004–19**



Source: US Office of Personnel Management.  
 Note: FEVS = Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey; OMB = Office of Management and Budget; OPM = Office of Personnel Management; PPO = Public Procurement Office.

the publication of the joint memo led to a positive trend in the majority of the FEVS questions in the following years (as shown in figure 26.6). This happened despite a change of administration, a government shutdown that lasted more than a month, below-market pay adjustments, and the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, as the FEVS became embedded in a wider architecture for public action, it became a stimulus for reform.

In many cases, where FEVS results were not translated into change in practice, it has been due to the lack of architecture at the agency level to support that translation process. Simply producing survey data, of however high a quality, is rarely enough to drive public action.

Despite the qualities of the FEVS and its related successes, there are legitimate criticisms of the relevance and scope of the FEVS survey questions. The FEVS focuses on drivers of staff engagement and thus has a limited scope in terms of topics. Similarly, given the complexity and breadth of work undertaken in the US federal government, it seems natural that a standardized survey would not be the most effective driver of change across all federal agencies all of the time. But the impacts it has inspired showcase the potential of employee surveys in inducing public action for better government.

## NOTES

The authors are grateful to Corey Adams, Gonzalo Ferro, Theeve Gray, Tracy Hilliard, and Stephen Pellegrino for discussions. Many of the authors have played a key role in the development of the Office of Personnel Management’s Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey or in its translation and use at the agency level over the past decade. The findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed in this paper are entirely those of the authors. They do not necessarily represent the views of any of the US federal agencies with which several authors are affiliated, including the US Office of Personnel Management.

1. Discussion of aspects of the FEVS can be found in chapter 9,, case study 9.3 in chapter 9, and chapter 25. FEVS data are also used in chapters 19, 20, 21, and 22.
2. For those interested in the specific details of the survey, the OPM releases technical reports each year to accompany the survey report and data. These are available on the OPM FEVS website at <https://www.opm.gov/OPMFEVS/reports/technical-reports/>. A special “research synthesis” in the *Public Administration Review* (Callahan 2015) articulated a series of academic perspectives on the strengths and weaknesses of the FEVS for public service reform and research.
3. See, for example, GAO (2015), which focuses on drivers of engagement and implications for various agencies; GAO (2018), which focuses on the OPM’s delivery of information on performance management; and GAO (2021), which focuses on the US Department of Homeland Security.
4. The current Best Places to Work index is available on the Partnership for Public Service’s website at <https://bestplacestowork.org/about/methodology/>.
5. The publication of the index by an external entity also allows for independent assessments of what drives improvements in the public service work environment, such as Partnership for Public Service and Deloitte (2013).
6. The full set of reports published by OPM can be found in the “Data Reports” section under “Reports” on the OPM FEVS website at <https://www.opm.gov/fevs/reports/data-reports>. Releases are limited to groups of at least 10 officers to safeguard against the identification of respondents.
7. The FEVS also provides the OPM itself with insights into weaknesses in the public service system as a whole that can be targeted without direct agency action. However, this chapter will focus on agency-level reform efforts in response to FEVS findings.
8. There are many potential topics on which a survey could focus, including the physical environment, relationships between colleagues, the quality of management, the engagement of the survey respondent with his or her job, and the most significant challenges the respondent finds to undertaking their work effectively. Chapter 18 provides an overview of the topics the world’s major public servant surveys focus on.
9. National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2004, Public Law 108–136, Nov. 24, 2003, 117 STAT. 1641.
10. *Examining Misconduct and Mismanagement at the National Park Service: Hearing before the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, House of Representatives*, 114th Cong. (2016). <https://www.congress.gov/event/114th-congress/house-event/LC51983/text?s=1&r=100>.
11. In a statement in response to the findings of the hearings, Deputy Director of the National Parks Service Michael Reynolds made reference to actions the agency took to try to improve working conditions for park staff (Reynolds 2016). A webpage outlining the response to the harassment issues can be found on the National Park Service website at <https://www.nps.gov/aboutus/transparency-accountability.htm>.
12. An alternative perspective is that centralized surveying generates greater awareness and appetite for surveys of public servants, thus increasing the likelihood of complementary efforts by managers. Frequently, the FEVS has inspired follow-up surveys by agencies seeking to better understand an area in which they are performing relatively poorly. And the structured survey approach of the FEVS can be complemented by deeper-dive focus groups and listening sessions, which can more deeply explore red flags relevant to a particular agency.
13. The FEVS has gradually changed its content over time to meet the evolving demands of officials using it for policy assessment and organization development initiatives. As outlined in figure 26.1, in 2012, a series of items were added to the FEVS to improve how well it could inform OPM policy evaluations, reports to Congress, and oversight functions, as well as workforce development initiatives within agencies. In 2020, items were added to support policy assessments, including military spouse items and new leave policies for COVID-19 pandemic response. Simultaneously, the performance confidence index was added to support change and development initiatives and action in agencies.
14. Conceptually, organizational climate is a surface manifestation of culture: employees’ perceptions of management practices and policies speak to the values and norms embodied in a culture.
15. The OPM highlights the main features of the successful workforce practices initiative on the “Successful Workforce Practices” page of its website at <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/human-capital-management/successful-workforce-practices/>. The website housing the full collection of successful practices is accessible by US government officials at <https://community.max.gov/display/HumanCapital/PMA+Successful+Workforce+Practices+Home>.
16. EVS ART can be accessed by all US government officials at <https://community.max.gov/display/HHS/EVS+ART>. A fuller exposition of EVS ART is provided in chapter 9 and case study 9.3 in chapter 9.

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