



CANCER PREVENTION & RESEARCH
INSTITUTE OF TEXAS

2014

Report on Customer Service





INTRODUCTION

Agency Mission

Pursuant to V.T.C.A., Health and Safety Code, Section 102.002, the Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas is to create and expedite innovation in the area of cancer research and to enhance the potential for a medical or scientific breakthrough in the prevention of cancer and cures for cancer; attract, create, or expand research capabilities of public or private institutions of higher education and other public or private entities that will promote a substantial increase in cancer research and in the creation of high-quality new jobs in this state; and develop and implement the Texas Cancer Plan.

Agency Philosophy

The Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas will act in accordance with the highest standards of ethics, accountability, efficiency, and transparency. We affirm that our constitutional responsibility to distribute public funds to cure and mitigate cancer is a commitment to the citizens of Texas. We approach our responsibilities with purpose to honor that commitment.

The Institute's Customers

As the State of Texas' flagship agency focused on combating the scourge of cancer, CPRIT is accountable to a number of external stakeholder groups, including:

- The citizens of Texas through the Legislature and state elected leaders;
- The state's academic medicine and research community, primarily located within its public and private institutions of higher education;
- The cancer prevention community, including clinicians, health educators and health and human service agencies, philanthropies, and particularly survivors and those living with the impact of cancer on their families and communities;
- The state's emerging bioscience industry and its partners among Texas economic developers; and
- CPRIT's national and international peers and colleagues engaged in combating cancer.

Grantmaking is the focus of the main strategies (Strategies 1.1.1 and 1.1.2) in CPRIT's strategic plan and in the General Appropriations Act. Therefore, CPRIT's direct customers are entities applying for, receiving, utilizing, and administering Institute grant awards, and the particular individuals with designated roles in the grant process as defined in state law and administrative rules and procedures governing CPRIT's operations. These include principal investigators as well as program and organization managers and representatives and, notably, financial administrators and grant monitors.



The overall grant process used by CPRIT includes numerous customer service touchpoints related to the Institute's reporting requirements, which are among the most rigorous in the field of cancer research, as is appropriate for the investment of funds provided by Texas taxpayers. These touchpoints include both in-person and online interactions with CPRIT staff and systems.

Customer Service and CPRIT's Strategic Plan

The measures in CPRIT's adopted 2013-17 strategic plan do not include direct reference to customer service outcomes, outputs or efficiencies. However, it is clear that the quality, timeliness and efficiency of CPRIT's customer service are integral to the overall potential excellence of agency operations, and as a consequence the agency seeks continuous improvement in its transactions and relationships with customers.

In particular, CPRIT's ability to implement its statutory and administrative rule requirements for grant administration, monitoring and reporting is to an extent dependent on mutually satisfactory relationships with the grantees required to comply with those requirements. More broadly, it is possible for CPRIT's core goals, objectives and strategies — the awarding of grants — to be impaired by operational inefficiencies linked to customer service issues.



2014 CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY REPORT

Overview and Methodology

In April 2014, CPRIT fielded an online customer satisfaction survey to gauge perceptions and identify both successes and areas for improvement. Results of this survey include both quantitative and narrative data, which are summarized in this report.

Invitations to participate in the survey were distributed to 1,342 grantee representatives including:

- Principal investigators
- Program directors
- Company representatives
- Authorized signing officials
- Financial staff
- Office of sponsored programs staff

A total of 202 customers responded to the survey, representing a response rate of 15.1%. Of these, 78 provided written comments.

Descriptive data collected by the survey included:

- Nature of the customer's relationship with CPRIT
- Modes and methods of interaction (e.g., phone, in-person, email)
- Roles and positions of respondents

Perception data collected by the survey included customer assessments of several components of CPRIT's processes:

- Interaction with CPRIT staff
- Communications
- CPRIT's website
- Handling of complaints
- Grants application and review
- Grants feedback
- Grants helpdesk
- Post-award reporting

Narrative data was provided via open-ended comments.



Measures of Customer Service

The adopted CPRIT Strategic Plan for 2013-17 does not include specific measures related to customer service. The standard measures identified for customer service reporting among all state agencies by the Legislative Budget Board are as follows:

Outcome Measures

- **Percentage of surveyed customer respondents expressing overall satisfaction with services received:** Ranges from 34.7% – 62.9% depending on service (see below)
- **Percentage of surveyed customer respondents identifying ways to improve service delivery:** 31.6% of all respondents; 82.1% of those providing comments

Output and Explanatory Measures

- **Total customers surveyed:** 1,342, with 202 responses for a response rate of 15.1%.
- **Total customers served:** 1,342 direct customers
- **Total customers identified:** 1,342 direct customers
- **Total customer groups inventoried:** 6 customers groups

Efficiency Measures

- **Cost per customer surveyed:** \$0.05

Descriptive Data

D-1. What was the nature of your contact with CPRIT? (*more than one response allowed*)

Program/Activity	Percentage	Number
Scientific & Research Programs	54.5%	110
Prevention Programs	25.7%	52
Product Development Programs	4.5%	9
Finance	26.7%	54
Legal	2.0%	4
Compliance	1.5%	3
Helpdesk	5.5%	11
Other (specify)	4.0%	8
Total Respondents		202



D-2. How did you contact us? *(more than one response allowed)*

Mode	Percentage	Number
Phone	50.0%	101
In Person	5.9%	12
Email	88.6%	179
Mail	2.5%	5
Total Respondents		202

D-3. Which category/categories best describe you? *(more than one response allowed)*

Role/Position	Percentage	Number
Principal Investigator	40.1%	81
Program Director	8.4%	17
Company Representative	4.5%	9
Authorized Signing Official (ASO)	14.9%	30
Financial Staff	22.3%	45
Other	16.3%	33
Total Respondents		202

Perception Data

P-1. Staff: CPRIT's staff is helpful, courteous, knowledgeable, and prompt in response to an inquiry.

Assessment	Percentage	Number
Agree	62.9%	127
Neutral	20.8%	42
Disagree	13.4%	27
Not Applicable	3.0%	6
Total Respondents		202



P-2. Communications: Communicating with CPRIT via telephone, mail, or electronic mail is a trouble-free and efficient process.

Assessment	Percentage	Number
Agree	53.0%	107
Neutral	24.3%	49
Disagree	21.3%	43
Not Applicable	1.5%	3
Total Respondents		202

P-3. Website: CPRIT's website is user-friendly, easy to understand and contains useful information on both CPRIT and the funding opportunities provided by CPRIT.

Assessment	Percentage	Number
Agree	48.0%	97
Neutral	32.2%	65
Disagree	17.3%	35
Not Applicable	2.5%	5
Total Respondents		202

P-4. Complaints: Complaints are easy to file and resolved in a timely manner.

Assessment	Percentage	Number
Agree	21.3%	43
Neutral	25.3%	51
Disagree	15.8%	32
Not Applicable	37.6%	76
Total Respondents		202



P-5. Grants Application and Review: CPRIT's grant application and review process is understandable and transparent.

Assessment	Percentage	Number
Agree	46.0%	93
Neutral	27.7%	56
Disagree	10.9%	22
Not Applicable	15.4%	31
Total Respondents		202

P-6. Grants Feedback: Feedback concerning my grant application and its review helps me understand my application's strengths and weaknesses.

Assessment	Percentage	Number
Agree	45.1%	91
Neutral	18.3%	37
Disagree	4.5%	9
Not Applicable	32.2%	65
Total Respondents		202

P-7. Grants Helpdesk: Staff is helpful, courteous, knowledgeable and prompt in answering your inquiries about grant opportunities.

Assessment	Percentage	Number
Agree	63.9%	129
Neutral	20.8%	42
Disagree	3.0%	6
Not Applicable	12.4%	25
Total Respondents		202



P-8. Report Submittal-Post Award: Submitting reports through CPRIT’s post-award electronic grants management system is user-friendly and trouble-free.

Assessment	Percentage	Number
Agree	34.7%	70
Neutral	24.3%	49
Disagree	31.2%	63
Not Applicable	9.9%	20
Total Respondents		202

Narrative Data (Customer Comments)

Comments were offered in response to the following prompt language:

Please explain or include any additional information that you feel would help us to provide excellent customer service. Comments should be limited to feedback on customer service. If you have a question, please contact CPRIT by phone at (512) 463-3190.

Given this prompt, it is to be expected that many comments received identify areas of potential improvement; however, many customers also identified areas of superior customer service. The observations among the 78 comments received (some comments include multiple observations) can be categorized as follows:

Assessment	Percentage	Number
Positive (identifying areas of superior customer service)	33.3%	26
Neutral (technical or process observations, including suggestions for technical improvements)	24.4%	19
Negative (identifying deficiencies in customer service)	57.7%	45
Total Comments Received		78
Total Observations Categorized		90



The following were cited in multiple **positive** observations by customers:

- General appreciation of CPRIT's efforts
- Overall timeliness of responses, particularly via phone and email
- The Grants Helpdesk and its efforts to resolve technical issues with CPRIT's online systems for grant application, review and management
- The Grants Program Management staff

The following were cited by customers in **neutral** observations:

- Specific suggestions for technical improvements that would improve the efficiency of the online systems
- Requests for further training and education of grantees, particularly in light of new requirements instituted by CPRIT in 2013 and 2014

The following were cited in multiple **negative** observations by customers:

- The overall cumbersomeness of the online post-grant management and report submittal system (by contrast, assessments of the online grant application system and of the portal used for grant review were generally positive)
- Within that system, specific difficulties caused by an inability of CPRIT staff to review and approve reports in time for grantees to avoid missing deadlines or causing delays in the distribution of funds, or to communicate rule and procedure changes
- Overall concerns with the rigor and stringency of CPRIT rules and procedures and difficulty of compliance (often held in contrast to other funding agencies such as NIH); similar feedback was received by the agency during the rulemaking process
- Complaints about the helpfulness, courtesy, capability or expertise of CPRIT financial management and reporting staff



ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS AND AGENCY RESPONSE

While we view the findings of this customer service survey as generally positive, we acknowledge there are important areas where CPRIT can improve its relationships with customers and the quality and efficiency of its services, and we are committed to doing so. Some of these include:

- We continually work with our third-party grants administrator, SRA, and with our internal IT staff on refinements to the online systems used by CPRIT customers to apply for, review, administer and report on their grants. We intend to pay particular attention to issues that have been identified with the post-award reporting system, some of which have been exacerbated by the requirements of CPRIT's new administrative rules and procedures designed to improve agency transparency and accountability.
- Pursuant to the adoption of those rules, CPRIT has already begun the process of training grantees to assist them with grant compliance. We anticipate that this training will continue as needed to ensure optimal compliance and satisfactory transactions for both customers and CPRIT.
- The agency has identified new staffing needs, particularly in post-award monitoring, and is filling or seeking to fill those positions, including both FTEs allocated to the agency under the General Appropriations Act for the current biennium as well as redefining existing positions to address these needs.

It should be noted that some of the findings of this survey, including some of the expressions of dissatisfaction provided as comments, echo concerns that CPRIT has already encountered as the agency has worked with its customers and stakeholders to restart grant operations, adopt new administrative rules, and implement new procedures during fiscal year 2014. We remain committed to open dialogue with those customers and stakeholders and continuous improvement and refinement of CPRIT's procedures and operations to ensure that the agency best fulfills its critical mission to combat cancer on behalf of the people of Texas. In keeping with our customer service standards of resolving complaints, CPRIT will provide feedback to all invited survey participants about our efforts to address concerns and expressions of dissatisfaction raised in the survey.