

Conduct of the Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey

PRACTICE NOTE No. 22

ISSUED OCTOBER 2025

Background

The Local Government Performance Reporting Framework (LGPRF) is an annual reporting framework that requires councils to report on a set of mandatory performance indicators through their Report of Operations, audited Performance Statement, and the Sector Performance report (Know Your Council).

Within the LGPRF, three indicators measure community satisfaction with council performance:

- G2 – Satisfaction with community consultation and engagement
- G5 – Satisfaction with council decisions (*Audited*)
- R5 – Satisfaction with sealed local roads (*Audited*)

These indicators must be derived from a representative, random probability survey of residents aged 18 years and over, within the participating local government area (LGA).

To efficiently support this requirement, Local Government Victoria (LGV) engages an accredited social and market research provider to conduct the Community Satisfaction Survey on behalf of councils. This survey meets the highest standards of public market research and the results allow councils to report satisfactorily against the above indicators.

Councils are free to engage their own provider to generate the required information these indicators, along with other relevant information.

This Practice Note outlines the required standards for those councils that elect to engage their own provider. In doing so, their provider must meet the minimum standards set out in this Practice Note. These standards ensure that:

- Data collected is consistent and comparable across the local government sector; and
- Councils obtain statistically valid and reliable results that represent a sound return on their investment.

- Results are representative of their community's views and free of bias.

Required Standards

The required minimum standards of the CSS methodology from 2026 onwards are as follows:

1. Minimum sample size
2. Quality assurance and compliance
3. Survey methodology
4. Consistent schedule for fieldwork
5. Index scoring
6. Accessible to Non-English speakers
7. Quotas and weighting applied to ensure representativeness

These standards are outlined in further detail below.

1. Minimum sample size

To ensure statistical confidence in the results, the survey must achieve a minimum completed sample of 400 respondents per council, or an effective sample size sufficient to achieve a maximum margin of error of $\pm 5\%$ at the 95% confidence level. The achieved sample must be proportionally representative of the municipality's adult population by age and gender, based on the most recent Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) demographic data.

Where minor imbalances occur, post-stratification weighting must be applied to adjust the achieved sample to align with the known population profile. Weighting procedures must be transparent, documented, and applied consistently to preserve comparability of results.

2. Quality assurance and compliance

The survey must be conducted by a provider that can demonstrate current membership with The Research Society or the Australian Data and Insights Association (ADIA) (formerly the Association of Market and Social Research Organisations).

Providers not affiliated with these organisations will be required to provide documented evidence of equivalent professional accreditation and independent verification of compliance with recognised industry standards.

The survey provider and all sub-contracted fieldwork, data-processing, and analytics partners must hold current accreditation under the International Standard for Market, Opinion and Social Research (AS ISO 20252), with independent certification documentation provided prior to fieldwork commencement.

3. Survey methodology

The provider may utilise any survey methodology or combination of methods, provided they can be verified as statistically valid and comparable.

Methods should be chosen with a focus on ensuring:

- Random, representative sampling of residents;
- Consistent and verifiable data collection; and
- High reliability for longitudinal comparisons.

Any use of mixed-mode surveys must be carefully designed to ensure data comparability across modes and maintain consistent sampling procedures.

4. Consistent schedule for fieldwork

Fieldwork shall be conducted at a consistent time each year to ensure comparability of results over time.

Where the appointed provider delivers the survey over multiple years, they shall develop a comprehensive fieldwork schedule covering the entire survey process. This schedule shall be replicable and consistent to ensure reliable year-on-year trend comparisons.

The survey can be conducted on an annual, biannual or quarterly basis, depending on the council's reporting requirements. Where data is collected quarterly, the provider shall ensure that results are accurately aggregated and weighted to produce a valid annual result.

5. Scaling method and Index score calculation

The provider must implement a consistent scaling method to assess both positive and negative community responses. This method shall allow responses to be converted into an indexed score, enabling standardised reporting and comparability across councils and over time.

The Index Score shall be represented on a 0 to 100 scale. To calculate the score:

1. The percentage result for each response category shall be multiplied by the corresponding Index Factor, producing an Index Value for each category.
2. The Index Values shall be summed to produce the overall Index Score.

Example:

Response Category	% Result	Index Factor	Index Value (% × Factor)
Very Satisfied / Very good	40%	1.0	40
Satisfied / Good	35%	0.75	26.25
Neutral / Average	15%	0.5	7.5
Dissatisfied / Poor	7%	0.25	1.75
Very Dissatisfied / Very Poor	3%	0.0	0
Total / Index Score			75.5

In this example, 'can't say' responses are excluded. Any exclusions should be noted in the analysis in the published report.

Handling Negative Responses

The provider shall account for negative responses in a consistent and transparent manner to ensure the Index Score reflects both positive and negative community sentiment:

1. Assign Index Factors: negative response categories shall be assigned lower Index Factors, down to 0 for the most negative category.
2. Include in Calculation: all response categories, including negative responses, shall be included in the Index Score calculation.
3. Transparency: the provider shall document and supply the Index Factors applied to each response category, including the method used for negative responses.

6. Non-English speakers

The provider must offer the survey to potential respondents in multiple languages other than English to meet the demographic profile of the municipality and be resourced to do so prior to field work commencement.

7. Quotas and weighting applied to ensure representativeness

Sampling targets must reflect the population in each LGA based on the latest ABS data. Gender quotas should be at least 40% overall, with six age-gender groups (Males 18–34, 35–49, 50+; Females 18–34, 35–49, 50+) also set to at least 40% of the LGA population. Post-weighting should then be applied to ensure the final sample accurately represents these groups.

Audit compliance

As part of the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework, two performance indicators are subject to an annual audit by the Victorian Auditor-General's Office. Accordingly, audit evidence for these measures must demonstrate the supplier's full compliance with all requirements specified in this Practice Note.

When engaging a supplier, a council is directly responsible for ensuring these requirements are met. If there is any uncertainty, councils should consult with their auditor to confirm that their proposed methodology is compliant

