

July 2021 CX Survey Results and Recommendations

Purpose

Discuss results of the July 2021 Customer Experience (CX) Survey, propose recommendations for changes and outline lessons learned.

Background

In Fiscal Year 2019, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) identified the Division of Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation (DEEOIC) as a High Impact Service Provider (HISP) due to the importance of the services that DEEOIC provides. OMB issued guidance to HISPs ([OMB Circular A-11 Section 280](#) "Managing Customer Experience and Service Delivery") to incorporate the principles of customer experience into their organizations and ensure that customer experience practices are integrated into program delivery.

To highlight their commitment to their stakeholders, DEEOIC created a Customer Experience (CX) Team within the Branch of Outreach and Technical Assistance (BOTA) consisting of a Stakeholder Engagement Analyst and a Customer Experience Strategist. DEEOIC finalized their hiring for this team in mid-2021. The mission of this team includes soliciting feedback from stakeholders, conducting analyses of data, and making data-driven recommendations for programmatic and procedural improvements.

To identify areas for improvement and satisfy the HISP requirements, the CX Team developed a plan to solicit feedback from customers across different touchpoints.

Survey Results

For its first feedback solicitation, the CX team identified all individuals who received a final decision between 03/2021 and 05/2021, selected a random sample (2,000 claimants), and mailed surveys in July 2021.



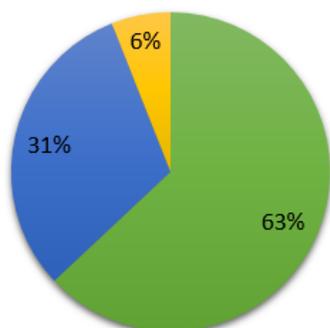
2,000 surveys mailed
630 responses
32% response rate



207 follow-up calls
100 conversations

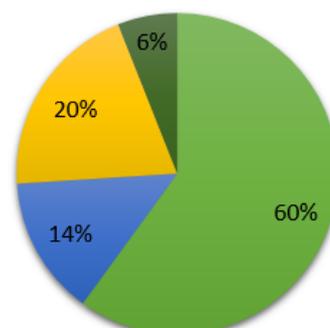
630 survey responses were received between July and November 2021. Respondents who identified their final decision as an acceptance sent the majority of responses (60%) which was on par with our sample population (approximately 63% acceptance). Approximately 20% of respondents did not identify what the outcome of their final decision was. The charts below compare the surveys sent (by final decision) with the returned surveys by the claimant-identified final decision.

SURVEYS SENT BY FINAL DECISION



■ acceptance ■ denial ■ part accept/part deny

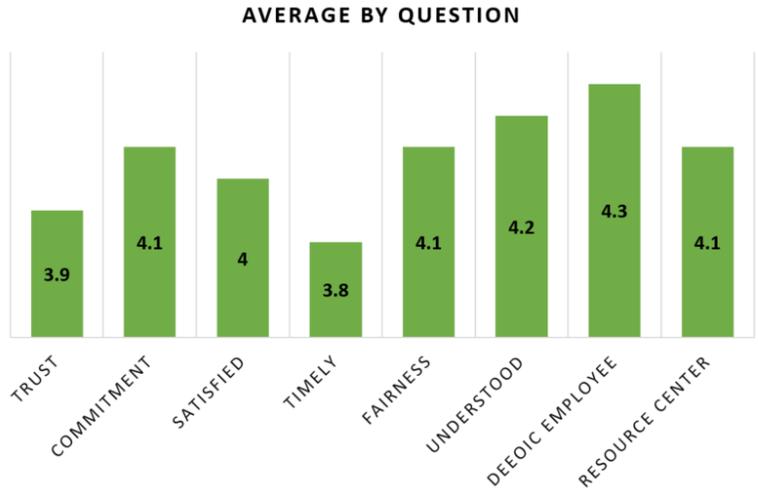
SURVEYS RETURNED BY FINAL DECISION



■ acceptance ■ denial ■ blank ■ part accept/part deny

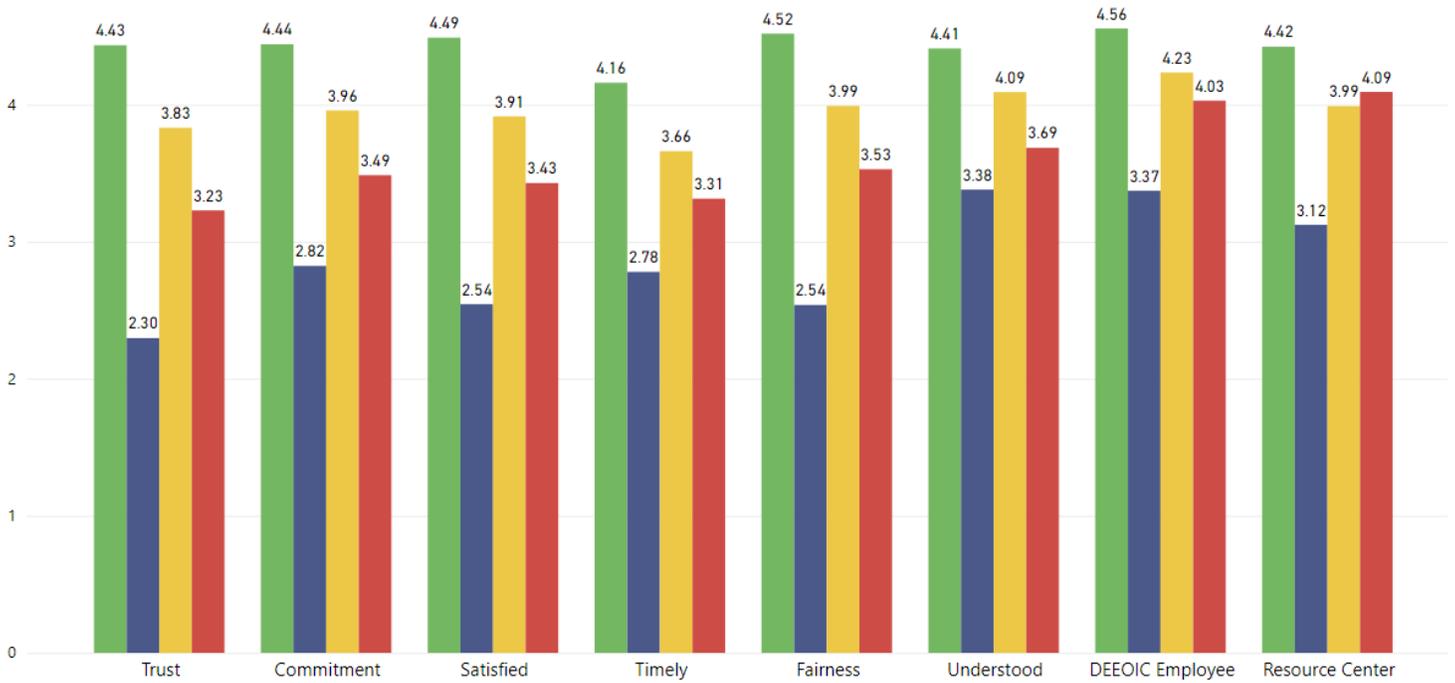
Survey Results (cont'd)

The CX Team analyzed individual question scores as well as written comments submitted on the respondents' forms. Questions were scored from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The lowest average score by question, 3.8 out of 5, was received on the question related to timeliness (Q: It took a reasonable amount of time to do what I needed to do to allow for my Final Decision to be issued). The question that received the highest score, 4.29 out of 5, was related to DEEOIC employees (Q: DEEOIC employees I interacted with were helpful).



Average By Question & Final Decision

Final Decision ● acceptance ● denial ● not identified ● part acceptance/part denial



As part of the survey, claimants could provide their name and phone number if they wanted to share additional information with the CX Team. The CX Team called 207 survey respondents and connected with 100 of those, leaving voicemails with callback information for the rest. The conversations focused on claimant experience and identifying pain points or bright spots during the process. The table to the right shows the number of conversations by identified final decision. Note that a majority of conversations were with stakeholders that identified their final decision as an acceptance.

Identified Final Decision	Count of Conversations
Acceptance	56
Denial	20
Blank	17
Part Accept/Part Denial	7
Total	100

Recommendations

Based on the results and analysis of the survey, the CX Team identified three broad areas where DEEOIC can make improvements to enhance and improve customer experience.

1

Improve Claimant Comprehension

26% of phone calls and 7% of written comments mentioned concerns about comprehension or government language/jargon in DEEOIC correspondence. On the survey, the question most related to comprehension (Q: I understood what was being asked of me) received an overall 4.16 out of 5. It is important to note that 18.4% of respondents scored that question as a 3 or lower.

1a

Edit the FD or RD format (BLUF format)

Propose the formation of a working group to identify potential improvements and format updates to the RDs and FDs. Consider implementing a “bottom-line up-front format” for important correspondence. Many claimants indicated that they had trouble with the government language or jargon in correspondence - stating that they needed to consult others (lawyers, medical personnel, family members) to help them understand. Some claimants did not understand why they were denied because the letters were not clear, and the message was lost in the statement of the case. For example, one of our respondents did not understand why he was denied for benefits because his RD/FD simply said “Your employment with the DOE-NNSA is not covered employment under Part E of the EEOICPA.” The claimant did not understand that Part E of EEOICPA is limited to DOE contractors and subcontractors, or their survivors. Adding in a sentence that addresses WHY the employment wasn’t covered would have gone a long way in improving the comprehension for this individual.

1b

Plain Language Training Refreshers

Propose Plain Language Refresher training courses for DEEOIC employees. Multiple claimants stated that they needed help to understand their letters. There were complaints of government jargon or references to the law. In general, claimants do not have the in-depth knowledge of the program that the DEEOIC staff have. What may seem clear to a DEEOIC employee may not be as clear to a stakeholder. Plain language refreshers will encourage DEEOIC staff to write for their audience and help ensure language is more easily understood.

1c

Develop Infographics

Develop and publish infographics on a variety of topics. Infographics (information + graphics) are tools for communication that use visuals and text to present complex information quickly and clearly. DEEOIC can use infographics to explain benefits, processes, and systems in a straightforward way to alleviate confusion and improve communication with stakeholders.

2 Setting Expectations/Transparency

29% of phone calls and 17% of written comments mentioned timeliness, setting expectations, or communication as a concern. Our overall survey score on timeliness was our lowest score (Q: It took a reasonable amount of time to do what I needed to do to allow for my Final Decision to be issued)– scoring an overall 3.8 out of 5. Additionally, the trust question (Q: The interactions increased my trust in DEEOIC) scored only slightly higher than the timeliness question – netting an average score of 3.9 out of 5.

2a Publish Estimated Processing Times on DEEOIC Website

Propose that estimated processing times be available to claimants. Claimants indicated that they felt the process took too long or that they didn't know what sort of timeline to expect. Timeliness specifically was a concern mentioned by 25% of claimants during follow-up phone calls. Setting the expectation by including average or estimated processing times would help to reduce the anxiety claimants feel when they go for an extended period without hearing anything about their claim. The CX Team understands that these are complex cases and a definitive timeline can't always be provided but a general idea of timeframe may help improve claimants understanding.

2c Status Tracker/ECOMP Updates

As eCOMP utilization increases, the CX Team proposes researching the potential for a more robust status tracker that clearly identifies when claimants need to take action. Ideally the tracker would show the general steps in the process so that claimants can understand how far they are in the process without having to call the phone lines. Other features can also be researched if utilization increases. Understanding that this would take monetary resources and a high level of effort, this would be a longer term project and require input from different sources.

2b Focus on the WHY

Throughout the calls, the CX Team noted that there was a perception that requests or decisions were not always explained clearly or in a manner that our claimants understood. The CX Team found that those claimants that did not understand the decisions or requests were less likely to trust the organization and may feel uneasy. Verbal reminders to staff and ensuring that training stresses the need to clearly explain decisions or requests may assist with countering this perception. For example, in our phone conversations, 8% of stakeholders stated that they were asked for the same paperwork multiple times. To the stakeholder, it wasn't clear if there was something missing from their original submission or if their paperwork had been misplaced. Explaining decisions and requests clearly (in this case why the paperwork was needed or what changes needed to be made) will help increase stakeholder's trust in the organization.

3

Customer Service Focus

9% of phone calls and 5% of written comments mentioned that they had a negative experience with DEEOIC employees. While there were complaints about interactions with employees, it is noted that the highest score on the survey (~4.3 out of 5) was on the question related to DEEOIC employees being helpful. To further break this out, on the survey, 7.2% of respondents scored their response as a 1 (strongly disagree) or a 2 (disagree) for this question.

3a

Develop Phone Call Best Practices

Devise additional best practices for phone interactions with claimants/authorized representatives. Some respondents indicated that they did not know when they would receive a call back or ended up playing phone tag with DEEOIC staff. An example of a best practice to address this issues would be for the caller (DEEOIC staff) who receives voicemail when attempting to reach a stakeholder to indicate on the voicemail message what time they will attempt to reach the stakeholder again so that they may be prepared to take the phone call and know when to expect a call back.

3b

Additional Customer Service Training

Recommend that DEEOIC staff take annual training on difficult conversations. There were complaints of rude or upsetting interactions with staff. The CX Team understands that difficult situations may arise during the claims process. Several courses exist on LearningLink already including: Customer Service: Difficult Conversations, How to Manage Difficult Conversations, Listening Even When It's Difficult to Listen, Difficult People: Can't Change Them so Change Yourself, and more. Suggest a review of these courses and the addition to staff training plans. If none of these courses fit, suggest that DEEOIC design and implement their own course.

3c

Avoid Discussing Potential Claim Outcomes

Suggest reminders – either verbally or in a required training – to be cautious about guessing the outcome of a claim. Four claimants that were called specifically stated that they were told by DEEOIC staff that they would be approved but when they received a Recommended Decision they were denied. This led to confusion and feelings of distrust.

Lessons Learned

While the survey was successful and provided valuable insights into the stakeholder's experience, the CX Team recognizes that there are areas for improvement moving forward. This was the CX Team's first time implementing a targeted customer experience survey and it proved to be a learning experience. Lessons learned, and next steps, are detailed below.

More thoughtful survey questions

The current members of the CX Team inherited the original survey questions from a former DEEOIC employee. The survey had already received clearance through the Paperwork Reduction Act process. Upon review, the CX Team noted that the approved questions did not satisfy all of the customer experience driver sub-categories as listed in the A11-280 guidelines. The CX Team will design future surveys to ensure that the necessary sub-categories are covered in the survey questions. This will allow DEEOIC to submit a more robust quarterly report to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

Respond to request for phone calls in a more timely manner

Due to staff transitions, and a surprisingly large number of requests for calls, the CX Team was unable to call respondents until a couple months into the process. As a result of the delay, some respondents didn't remember the survey by the time they received a follow-up call. Moving forward, the CX Team plans to call respondents as survey submissions are received. In addition to being fresh in the minds of the stakeholders, it will also help increase trust in DEEOIC and highlight DEEOIC's commitment to stakeholders.

Alter the form to ensure clarity

During collection of the responses, the CX Team noted that there was an unusually high number of respondents that provided their information in the optional section for those requesting a follow up call. More than 30% of respondents provided a phone number on the form. The CX Team followed up with these individuals, speaking to approximately half of those that provided their phone number. It appears that the format of the survey was not as clear as it could have been and some respondents were not aware they were requesting a phone call. The CX Team will edit the form on future surveys to make it very clear that only those requesting a call need to provide their name and phone number.

Include suggested cutoff date

Survey submissions continued to trickle in until mid-December, approximately 5 months after the survey was mailed. For future surveys, the CX Team will request surveys be submitted by a certain date. This will allow the team to perform the appropriate analysis and reporting in a timely manner. Submissions received after the date will still be reviewed but they may not be included in official documents/reports.

Final Thoughts

Overall, the first iteration of DEEOIC's customer experience survey was a success. The CX Team was able to utilize the data and identify areas for improvement that should have a positive impact on DEEOIC stakeholders. Many stakeholders expressed gratitude for the opportunity to speak with a DEEOIC employee about their experience (whether good or bad). It is important to note, that while this report focuses on the areas for improvement, there was a lot of positive feedback about DEEOIC staff and the program in general.

Appendix A

Random Sample of Comments:

- I don't understand that the DEEOIC has already agreed that my body poisoned by radiation. Now when I file a claim I must prove it all over again. Something is wrong with this process.
- DOL is the most professional, responsive, efficient government agency. Period!
- This process was smooth with the people who handled my case. Could not have asked for a more helpful group of people. Thanks!
- The final determination seems to be based on the number of days my husband was at the plant rather than exposure! My husband's life was diminished and all that was of concern was had he worked a certain number of days. How long does the exposure need to be to start cancer growth?
- The help we received at the Hanford Resource Center was exceptional in every way! Outstanding.
- I was denied because could not get correct information. Hospital did not know what I needed. I sent bills for over \$900 but could not get whatever proof you needed. This has been going on for over a year. So I just accept your denial.
- I can't talk with anyone because it will end up to same things of with Depart of Energy and Dept. of Labor. No matter how much information you give them you end up getting the same answers. I'm too old to beat them.
- [Name Redacted] made it as difficult as possible. I had to go over her head to her supervisor to get it completed. She kept asking for information she already had.
- I would like to thank everyone involved and their total commitment to their job and their people.
- I appreciated very much the conversation I had with the gentleman who performed the dose reconstruction analysis. He explained it very clearly so my dad and I could understand it.
- My claims examiner has been very patient with me and help me understand the complete process. She would be an excellent choice to train other case managers how to treat elderly people who do not fully understand the way DOL processes claims. She gets an A+ from me.
- Some or all of the terminology was confusing. All of the correspondence should be in layman terms. I'm not a lawyer and did not understand all of my options on what to do and how to do it. Very difficult!
- I would like to thank everyone involved and their total commitment to their job and their people.
- It seemed like the right hand didn't know what the left hand was doing. Took way too long from beginning to end.
- My complaints are too numerous to fit in this "comments" box. They extend over the 10 years since my initial claim under the EEOICPA, and include a decade of trying to deal with the governmental bureaucracy of the DOL.
- Our latest examiner was most efficient and kind. Making up for the horrible experience with our previous examiner, she was rude and insensitive at times. Many praises for our latest examiner - thank you sir!
- Great customer service. Everyone I interacted with was very helpful.
- It took a long time.
- May God bless DEEOIC to continue the work for the people. Thank you for all your work.
- Was not clearly understanding of what was needed for my claim.

Appendix B

U.S. Department of Labor

Office of Workers' Compensation Programs
 Division of Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation
 200 Constitution Ave, NW, Room C-3321
 Washington, D.C. 20210



CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE SURVEY

Please agree or disagree with the following statements by circling a numerical response:	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
The interactions and process leading to the most recent Final Decision increased my trust in the Division of Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation (DEEOIC).	5	4	3	2	1	n/a
I trust DEEOIC to fulfill our country's commitment to our nuclear weapons employees and contractors.	5	4	3	2	1	n/a
I am satisfied with the service I received from DEEOIC.	5	4	3	2	1	n/a
It took a reasonable amount of time to do what I needed to do to allow for my Final Decision to be issued.	5	4	3	2	1	n/a
I was treated fairly.	5	4	3	2	1	n/a
I understood what was being asked of me throughout the process.	5	4	3	2	1	n/a
DEEOIC employees I interacted with were helpful.	5	4	3	2	1	n/a
The Resource Center employees, if applicable, were committed to solving my problem.	5	4	3	2	1	n/a

Finally, please circle whether your Final Decision was:

an acceptance of benefits a denial of benefits or part acceptance/part denial.

Additional Comments:

If you would like to speak with our Customer Experience team about your experience, please provide your name and telephone number (OPTIONAL).

Name: _____

Telephone number: _____

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 5 minutes per response, including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Your response is voluntary. Send comments regarding the burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, by email (Novack.Joshua@dol.gov) and reference the OMB Control Number 1218-0276.