

DEEOIC CX Team

March 2022 CX Survey Results and Recommendations

Purpose

To discuss results of the March 2022 Customer Experience (CX) Survey and propose recommendations for programmatic improvements.

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 act upon their commitment to 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 the 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.

The CX Team regularly develops surveys and methodologies for collecting relevant customer feedback at different points in time (“touchpoints”) throughout the customer’s journey with DEEOIC. The team has already collected and analyzed feedback on two touchpoints: receipt of a final decision and receipt of an initial development letter (i.e., request for additional evidence). As part of its paper survey initiative, the CX Team developed the current survey, which focuses on the experience claimants had when filing for medical travel reimbursement. Similar to the completed Development Letter Survey, this collection included an optional Equity Assessment in response to the January 2021 “Executive Order on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government.” The data gathered from the Equity Assessment will help the CX Team identify potential areas for improvement and understand the unique challenges that DEEOIC stakeholders may face.

Survey Results

For its third paper feedback solicitation, the CX team identified all individuals who received travel reimbursement in the past 6 months, selected a random sample and mailed surveys in March 2022.

2,000

Total Surveys Sent

856

Survey Responses

43.3%

Response Rate

312

Written Comments

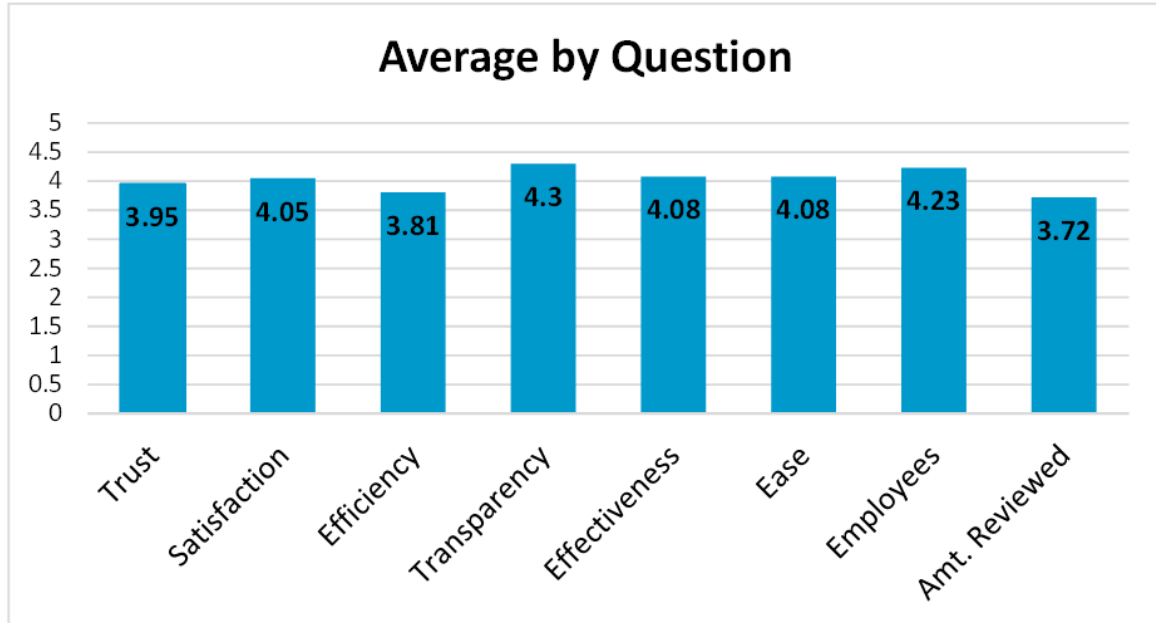
744

Equity Assessment Responses

265

Equity Comments

Survey Results (cont'd)



The survey included nine questions, seven of which related to a Customer Experience Driver outlined in A-11 Section 280. Eight of the questions were scored from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The final question was a yes-or-no response related to the claimant's expectations regarding their reimbursement amount. The CX Team analyzed individual question scores.

The question that received the highest score, 4.30 out of 5, was related to transparency (Q: I understood what I needed to provide for approval for travel reimbursement.)

Three questions received an overall score under 4.

- *The lowest average score by question, 3.72 out of 5, was received on the question related to the review process (Q: When I disagreed with the amount I was reimbursed for travel, I found it was easy to have it reviewed.)
- *The second lowest score, 3.81 out of 5, was received on the question related to efficiency (Q: The travel reimbursement process is moving at a reasonable pace.).
- *The third lowest score, 3.95 out of 5, was received on the question related to trust (Q: The process leading up to receiving reimbursement for travel increased my trust in the Division of Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation (DEEOIC).

83% of respondents stated they received the amount they expected when filing for medical travel reimbursement. Only 8.5% of respondents indicated that they did not receive the amount they expected when filing for medical travel reimbursement.

Comment Analysis

There were two optional open-response questions on this survey. The first page provided space for additional feedback on the customer's medical travel reimbursement experience while the second page requested input on how DEEOIC could deliver more equitable services. A total of 433 respondents provided some type of additional written comment (312 comments on the first page, 265 comments on the equity assessment). While the intention of the two boxes was different, many respondents utilized both boxes to provide general feedback on their experience. As a result, the CX Team consolidated the comments and analyzed them, grouped together by theme. Some comments were categorized into more than one theme if they mentioned several different topics. The table on the next page shows the frequency and number of commenters by category.

Comment Analysis (cont'd)

COMMENT TAG THEME	COUNT	PERCENT OF COMMENTS
timeliness/long process	125	29%
general experience (positive)	111	26%
other/neutral	85	20%
communication issues	67	15%
general negative/frustration	45	10%
difficult process	40	9%
specific commendation	39	9%
form issues	37	9%
website/technology	36	8%
employee issues/concerns	32	7%
gas related comment	19	4%
medical billing concerns	15	3%
inconsistent employees	12	3%
in-person visits	6	1%
provide assistance with	5	1%
transportation concerns	5	1%
help rural claimants find	3	1%
help for people who can't speak	1	0%
provide translation services	1	0%

Positive Themes:

- * The most common positive theme was related to **positive experience with the program**. This response includes comments like “You are doing a fine service to me!” and “Whenever I had a problem or needed help or information, everyone I spoke to was very helpful and nice.”
- * The other most positive comment theme was a **specific commendation**. These comments focused on thanking or praising specific employees or offices for their assistance during the process.

Negative Themes:

- * The most common negative theme was related to **timeliness/long process** which relates to the second lowest rated question, **efficiency**.
- * The second highest negative category focused on **communication issues**. These comments focused on lack of communication/follow-up, difficulty of reaching employees via phone, and general communication breakdown concerns.
- * Other common negative comment topics included **difficult process, issues with the OWCP-957 form, website/technology issues or requests, and general employee issues/concerns**.

Equity Assessment Results

The Equity Assessment was comprised of three components. The **first component** asked the claimant to indicate whether they had experienced barriers in their interactions with DEEOIC because of their:

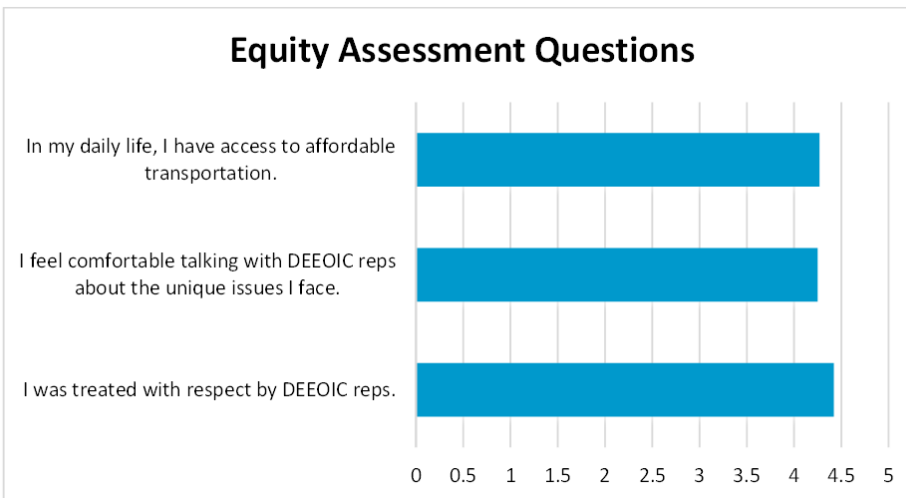
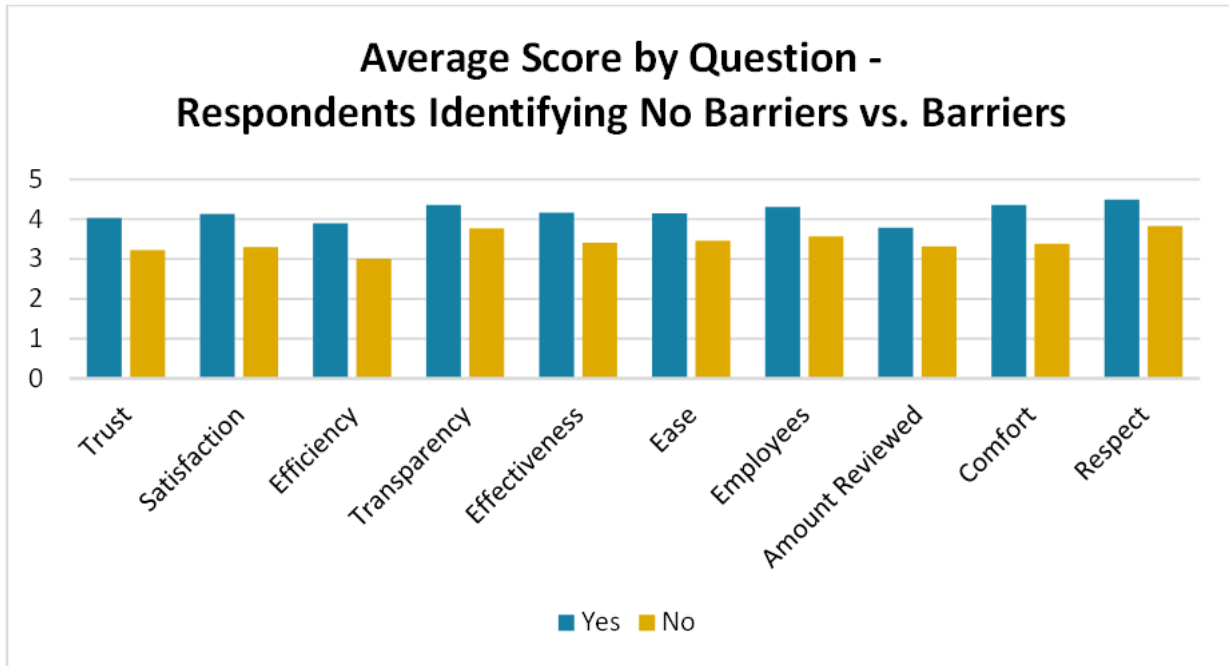
Ability or disability status; Racial or ethnic identity; Age; Sex/Gender Identity; Sexual Orientation; Veteran Status; Religion; Social class; Geographic location (remote/rural); or for other reasons.

Of the 744 Equity Assessments received, 85 respondents (11.4%) checked a box in this section. Results are shown on the next page. The most commonly identified category was ability/disability status, followed by geographic location and then age.

Equity Assessment Results (cont'd)

It is worth noting that when comparing the overall survey scores of respondents that marked at least one barrier checkbox versus respondents that did not feel that they encountered any of these barriers, the scores were lower across the board for those that identified perceived barriers (shown on the chart below). The largest disparities were identified in the “efficiency” question from the medical travel reimbursement-related questions (Q: The travel reimbursement process is moving at a reasonable pace.) and the “comfort” question on the equity assessment (Q. I feel comfortable talking with DEEOIC representatives about the unique issues I face.). The least impact was seen on the scores for the “amount reviewed” question (Q. When I disagreed with the amount I was reimbursed for travel, I found it was easy to have it reviewed.) and the “transparency” question (Q. I understood what I needed to provide for approval for travel reimbursement.).

EQUITY DIFFICULTIES	
Category	Frequency
Ability/disability status	38
Geographic Location	29
Age	19
Racial/ethnic identity	16
Other (include in note)	12
Sex/gender identity	6
Veteran status	3
Sexual orientation	3
Social Class	2
Religion	2
Grand Total	130



The second component included the three questions shown on the chart to the left, which also shows the average score. The average scores for all of these questions were high.

Note: the affordable transportation question is not a typical component of the Equity Assessment. The OWCP Deputy Director requested that the CX Team include a question to gauge DEEOIC claimants' access to affordable transportation. The data from this question were provided to the OWCP Front Office for further analysis.

Equity Assessment Results (cont'd)

Of the 265 comments provided on the equity assessment, the majority provided general program feedback and did not specifically address equity issues. Equity related suggestions included form changes, an easier document submission process, more in-person assistance/availability, assistance filling out the forms, better accommodations for hard of hearing or speaking on the telephone, special assistance helping rural claimants find providers and translation services (specifically Navajo).

The CX Team took a deeper look into the comments, compared submissions by claimants that identified perceived barriers and those that did not.

* 52 out of 85 (61%) with perceived barriers included comments (in either section)

* 381 out of 780 (49%) with no perceived barriers included comments (in either section)

In general, program issues brought to light by those who faced perceived barriers were similar to respondents who did not report facing barriers. The CX Team looked at the top six comment themes for both populations and observed that they both included timeliness/long process, communication issues, other/neutral, and general negative/frustration. Notably, respondents who did not perceive barriers were more likely to report a positive experience or give a specific commendation to a DEEOIC employee or office. Additionally, those respondents who did report facing barriers were more likely to cite negative interactions with employees than those who did not report facing barriers. Tables with the top six comment themes for each population are below (light blue shading highlights those categories ranked high within both populations).

PERCEIVED BARRIERS			NO PERCEIVED BARRIERS		
Comment Tag Theme	Count	Percent	Comment Tag Theme	Count	% of
timeliness/long process	23	44%	general experience	106	28%
communication issues	11	21%	timeliness/long process	102	27%
other/neutral	10	19%	other/neutral	75	20%
employee issues/concerns	10	19%	communication issues	56	15%
general negative/frustration	7	13%	general negative/frustration	38	10%
difficult process	7	13%	specific commendation	37	10%

Based on these results, there appears to be no overwhelming equity issues facing DEEOIC claimants. The perceived barrier that was most frequently selected was ability/disability status, with 38 respondents stating this was a concern. Given the nature of DEEOIC claimants, this result is consistent with the population that we serve since employee claimants receive benefits because of injury or illness on the job. However, the results do indicate that employee interactions with claimants drives how those who perceive barriers feel about their experience with DEEOIC.

The CX Team will continue to include an equity assessment on occasional CX surveys. The questions will be reviewed and redesigned to gather more useful information. Other methods of obtaining equity information are being discussed for future use.

Recommendations

There are three Customer Experience Drivers outlined in OMB Circular A11 Section 280, each of which have associated sub-drivers, shown below. The three areas in which DEEOIC received the lowest average ratings are sub-drivers “Ease/Simplicity”, “Efficiency/Speed”, and “Service Effectiveness”. The CX Team has developed recommendations for each of these sub-drivers.

CX Driver	Sub-drivers
Service Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Effectiveness/Perception of Value
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ease/Simplicity • Efficiency/Speed • Equity/Transparency
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employee Interaction/Warmth/Helpfulness/Competence

Process Driver, *Ease/Simplicity Sub-driver*

19% of commenters expressed difficulty with the process, the form, or asked for more help with paperwork.

1. Revise Form OWCP-957

We recommend a revision to Form OWCP-957. This form is at the center of the travel reimbursement process and each person who receives reimbursement must fill out this form. We suggest a three-pronged approach to improving this form. Suggested improvements are based on comments and customer feedback.

Short term:

- The phone number listed on the current form for DEEOIC is a FECA phone number. The incorrect number of 1-844-493-1966 should be corrected to 1-866-272-2682 (this has already been initiated and is ongoing).
- Develop more effective instructions/example of how to use the form to ensure reimbursement on the first submission (infographic, webinar).

Intermediate term:

- Develop an infographic on how to use online PDF form, for example, the ability to save the form to the desktop, as many respondents indicated the form could not be filled out on the website.
- Assess and address functionality issues of online PDF form. Several commenters indicated that the fillable PDF form was frustrating and difficult to use.

Long term:

- Establish cross-divisional working group to revise the form.
- Publish new form (requiring OMB review and approval). Many claimants complained about the small spaces and having to write the same address over and over on the form. Also having to fill out multiple forms as each form only allows for three visits. Specific suggestions include:
 - Formatting: Review the form and make it more user-friendly, enlarge the spaces on the existing OWCP form to help older adults
 - Intended form use: Allow for more than three visits on one form, allow multiple visits to the same office on one line. Perhaps add in frequency option with date range instead of an entry for each day.

2. Website/Technology

Several respondents indicated that they wanted the ability to submit the form electronically. This is currently an option through the bill processing contractor’s website, but it appears many claimants are unaware of this option. Additionally, the form, with supporting documents/receipts can be submitted via EDP, but not in the fillable format (meaning the form must first be printed to paper and then scanned or converted to a non-fillable PDF version, using Microsoft Print to PDF for example). We suggest identifying ways to improve education to claimants so they can submit forms electronically.

Recommendations (cont'd)

Process Driver, Efficiency/Speed Sub-driver

29% of commenters mentioned issues with timeliness and/or a long process. This was also the second-lowest scored question on the survey.

3. Process Review

We recommend that the Branch of Medical Benefits (BMB), Medical Bill Processing Unit (MBPU) conduct a process review of a sample of travel reimbursement cases. The purpose of the review would be to look at several claims from the beginning to end of the process and identify factors which created a delay in those cases that took more than the expected amount of time. Examples include claimants incorrectly filling out the form and having to resubmit, or claims being automated vs. not automated. Once the team identifies which parts of the process are the most problematic, they can devise solutions to address timeliness issues.

4. Clarify Contractor Responsibilities

Because a large part of the travel reimbursement process is operated by contractors, DEEOIC does not have full control over the length of time it takes to process a claim. We recommend that the MBPU, in collaboration with DAO, examine the timeliness standards in the existing contract, and in future iterations of contracts, ensuring that claimant reimbursement timeliness is a priority. and identify ways to clarify and enforce timeliness.

5. Educational Materials

We recommend developing educational materials (infographic or brochure) about the medical travel reimbursement process that explains the process, including the approximate length of time for each step.

Service Quality Driver, Service Effectiveness Sub-driver

As previously mentioned, the second highest negative comment category focused on communication issues. These comments focused on lack of communication/follow-up, difficulty of reaching employees via phone, and general communication breakdown concerns.

6. Improve Telephone Interactions

Phone calls regarding travel reimbursement are primarily handled by a bill processing contractor.

- a. We suggest including more language in the statement of work in any future contract to address phone/communication issues, such as the following:
 - Reduce time on hold/ensure claimants can talk to a representative.
 - Offer automatic callbacks, or a scheduled call, for stakeholders calling in.
 - Require that the contractor call claimants in a timely manner when their paperwork is incomplete or needs additional information.
- b. If substantive contract changes aren't possible or likely, then we suggest the following:
 - Develop methods where claimant reimbursement calls are re-directed to Resource Center or MBPU staff who can help the claimant navigate the reimbursement process and facilitate payment from the bill processing contractor .
 - Assure that specific Resource Center and MBPU staff have appropriate access and capabilities within the bill processing contractor's system to effectively support claimants with their reimbursement questions and issues. Require that the contractor call claimants in a timely manner when their paperwork is incomplete or needs additional information .
 - Develop communications channels between the Resource Center and MBPU staff with the bill processing contractor to assure that they can effectively communicate and facilitate claimant issues and needs to the vendor.



EQUITY & ACCESS ASSESSMENT

OWCP / DEEOIC is committed to finding ways to focus on equity for all, including people who have been historically marginalized or adversely affected by inequality. We strive for fair, just, and impartial treatment of all, including racial and ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, the LGBTQ+ community, rural communities, and other underserved populations. We want to improve program accessibility and inclusion.

In your interactions with DEEOIC, have you experienced difficulties because of your:	Please agree or disagree with the following statements by circling a numerical response:	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
Ability or disability status <input type="checkbox"/>	In my daily life, I have access to affordable transportation.	5	4	3	2	1	n/a
Racial or ethnic identity <input type="checkbox"/>	I feel comfortable talking with DEEOIC representatives about the unique issues I face.	5	4	3	2	1	n/a
Age <input type="checkbox"/>	I was treated with respect by DEEOIC representatives.	5	4	3	2	1	n/a
Sex/Gender identity <input type="checkbox"/>	What do you think DEEOIC could do better to deliver more equitable services?						
Sexual orientation <input type="checkbox"/>							
Veteran status <input type="checkbox"/>							
Religion <input type="checkbox"/>							
Social class <input type="checkbox"/>							
Geographic location (rural/remote) <input type="checkbox"/>							
Other _____ <input type="checkbox"/>							

CLOSED

The OMB control number for this collection is 1225-0093 and expires on 02/29/2024. According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no person is required to respond to a collection of information unless such collection displays a valid OMB control number. The obligation to respond to this collection is voluntary. We estimate it takes about 5 minutes to complete this collection of information, including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing the collection of information. Please send comments regarding the burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information to the U.S. Department of Labor, DEEOIC, 200 Constitution Ave., NW, Room C-3321, Washington, D.C. 20210 and reference OMB Control Number 1225-0093.

Note: Please do not return the completed form to this address.