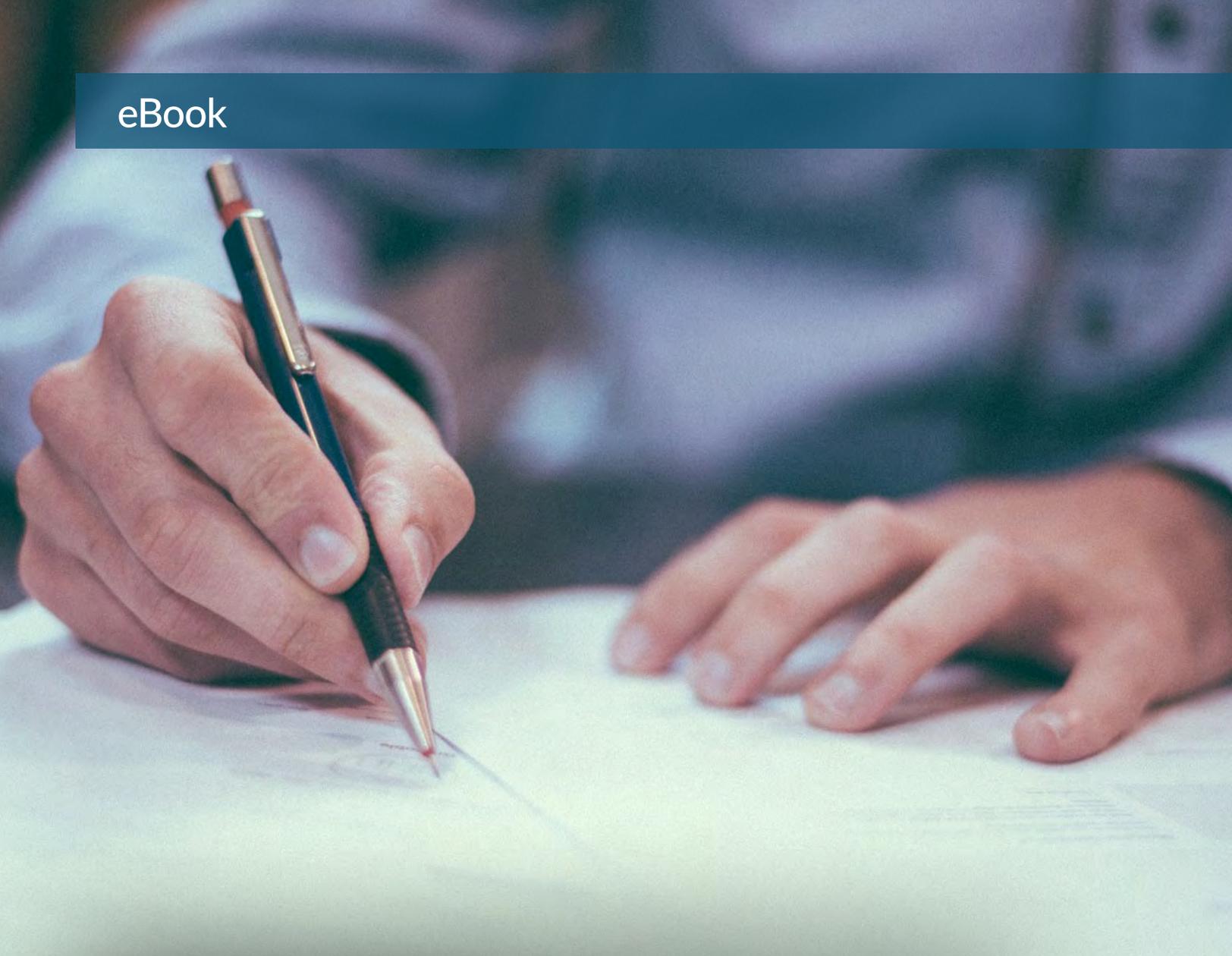


eBook



# Obtain Optimal Value from FEVS Results

*Get more from FEVS data using qualitative analysis driven by technology.*



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# Introduction

Every year, a sizable segment of the federal workforce participates in the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS). With 485,000 respondents in 2017 alone, there is a large pool of data from which agency directors, line managers, and HR departments can draw. FEVS consists of 98 questions and covers eight dimensions, including personal work experience, work unit, agency, supervisor, leadership, satisfaction, work/life programs, and demographics.

Despite this wealth of data, many of these departments fail to obtain optimal value from the survey results. Due to certain restrictions related to aggregation and a lack of technology solutions to parse the results, they are frequently evaluated at only a very basic level.

It is possible to dig deeper than high level scores like the Overall Employee Engagement (OEE) and Diversity and Inclusion Index (New IQ) and obtain real insights into what works and what does not.





# Limits of Currently Available FEVS Reporting

Currently, FEVS data available on the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) website has very little analysis. As a result, the reporting available to managers and directors within an agency, is limited. Often the result is a simple Excel spreadsheet that highlights the high and low score questions.

When someone within an agency wants to work with the FEVS results, they must pull that data from OPM, which administers the survey directly. They release only a high-level report of that data, and much of the data is aggregated to ensure employees remain anonymous in the results. While more specific requests can obtain more granular data from OPM, few people have the time or expertise to do this without outside support or tools.

## Working with Limited Context

FEVS has 98 questions and OPM provides data, including average response scores. Frequently, agencies fixate on the top 5 and bottom 5 scored questions.

This leads to several issues. Not only is it unclear whether the questions selected truly represent the most pressing issues within an agency, but the way in which the data is reported provides no context or historical data against which to measure it. All this information, however, is available with the right support and technology.

# Identifying High Impact Takeaways in the Data

Using advanced technology designed to evaluate survey results on a large scale, it is possible to obtain much greater value from the FEVS. By augmenting the quantitative analysis already completed and evaluating data on a qualitative level to support those findings, data takes on greater meaning within the context of the responses. Here are some of the ways in which greater value can be obtained:

## Visualize the Data

Data visualization creates more accessible reporting across the agency. It highlights key data points that are most important and might be otherwise lost. It also summarizes a large volume of information into a manageable form that executives can quickly evaluate. At the executive summary level, this makes it much easier to illustrate key insights that are more immediately actionable.

## Show Trends in Results Over Previous Years

Historical data can be included in FEVS results analysis to provide greater context over time. In mapping trends across multiple years, it is possible to see what has changed, what has not, and what actions potentially have an impact at different levels of an agency. For example, when a drop in overall FEVS scores occurs, having benchmarks from previous years makes it possible to determine which answers changed the most and, in turn, which changes in the agency may have caused those drops.

## Zero In On Results Specific to an Organization's Unit

All tools will be somewhat restricted in analyzing FEVS data due to the aggregation that OPM does. There are, however, some options for digging deeper into the hierarchy structure. With the right data requests and tools in place, it is possible to look at overall score for an agency, and then drill down into particular departments. Using software, this is easier than it would be in an Excel spreadsheet.

## Identify the Most Impactful Survey Items

For reporting to be truly actionable, it needs to offer multi-layered, contextual summaries of your data. [Key driver analysis](#) allows you to drill down to outcome-based questions such as employee satisfaction or engagement and identify different areas that have an impact on that outcome.

Rather than looking solely at the highest and lowest scores in aggregated FEVS data, you can evaluate which questions have the greatest weight in determining the outcome of the survey participant's responses. Analysis on a question-by-question basis helps identify where to focus efforts.

# Adding Qualitative Insights to the FEVS

With most analysis focused on the lowest hanging fruit, the underlying story behind scores that are not immediately apparent is often lost. A qualitative approach uncovers trends and context that might otherwise remain hidden. It ultimately helps in the creation of a better plan.

## Uncovering the Story of Your Organization

Those who craft action plans from a spreadsheet of responses risk committing to major changes without a complete understanding of why those changes are needed, or if they are needed at all. You are throwing things at the wall, hoping that a change sticks and results in an improvement next year.

Whether your overall score dropped or improved drastically from year-to-year, there's a reason for it. Something happened within your workforce to drive those changes, and one or two questions with low scores will not tell you why.

We have found in our work with federal agencies that focusing strictly on the lowest scoring questions has minimal impact on improving overall engagement. To truly uncover the story behind an agency's performance, we use a process called Key Driver Analysis. This process guides us in identifying the greatest opportunities for improvement.

## Focusing on the Right Questions in the FEVS

EconSys uses a four-category process for analyzing and prioritizing the highest-impact questions for your agency. The categories include:

- **Success (High Score, High Importance)** – These questions are already high-scoring, and there is little benefit to trying to develop these areas further as they are largely responsible for driving the employee satisfaction your agency already has today.
- **Critical Improvements (Low Score, High Importance)** – These are areas that offer the greatest potential for the government organization to boost employee satisfaction. Critical improvement questions are the low hanging fruit that can most drastically increase satisfaction.
- **Basics (High Score, Low Importance)** – These are areas where the organization received high scores but have relatively lower correlations to overall satisfaction levels.
- **Low Yields (Low Score, Low Importance)** – These questions are the false positives. Without a Key Driver Analysis, your team may be tempted to focus on improving the results of these questions. However, they would offer minimal or no lift in overall employee satisfaction.

Data is immensely powerful, but on its own, it can be overwhelming. Using technology and a keen eye for what came before and what results you are targeting, you can get more from your FEVS results.

# Build Action Plan for Change in an Organization

The goal of survey result analysis is to inform an action plan that enables change within the agency. By taking the extra steps needed to draw new insights from survey results data, you will have a better baseline against which to build such a plan.

To drive real change from FEVS results, here are some tips for acting in the year to come:

## Sharing Survey Results

The first step to encouraging positive change is to share survey results and analysis with stakeholders in a format that will ensure it gets the attention it deserves. There are several things you should consider:

- Visualization of Data for High Level Reporting – Visualization draws attention to the most important findings, especially when presented in the executive summary. Software can help further, allowing HR managers to drill down into data, filter, and report across all levels of an agency.
- Prioritize Improvements – Resources are limited, so target opportunities that will drive substantial improvement. Consider a tool that can help determine the key drivers for change in your organization – identifying the most impactful questions and the opportunities that, in turn, will result in the most improvement in employee satisfaction.

By extracting value through data visualization and ensuring you offer the best reporting to your stakeholders, you can greatly increase the likelihood that they act on it.

## Plan and Implement Action

FEVS is a useful tool to identify organizational strengths that can be replicated and improved upon. FEVS results can also identify negative trends that can be examined and rectified before they go on for too long. No matter the scores, however, it is critical to use the results to inform action. It costs the federal government time and money to administer FEVS. The only way the taxpayer can receive a ROI is if agencies take a specific action, informed by the survey. They would not have taken the action had the survey had not been administered.

Action plans can include policy changes, training designed to improve skills or raise awareness, providing opportunities for advancement, or realigning the workforce to better accomplish the mission. The following factors heavily influence whether action plans will be successful.

- **Leadership Commitment** Having a clear mandate from senior leadership, as well as other stakeholders, improves the odds of success. There are many issues for agency leadership to focus on, but leadership needs to commit time and resources to employee engagement to ensure improvement is seen.
- **Accountability** Action plans should clearly identify important stakeholders and who is responsible for what. This helps everyone understand their role in improving employee engagement as well as the roles of others. This also helps generate motivation for change by giving a sense of ownership.
- **Goals** Should be established to give stakeholders objectives to strive for. Techniques from goal-setting theory (e.g. goal commitment, SMART goals) can be used improve motivation. High-level goals can be broken down into smaller goals, which serves as yardsticks to track success.
- **Support Systems** While the action plan will specify individual responsibilities, action plans should not hamper a collaborative, helpful community. Support systems should be put in place to provide additional backing to those who need it.

## Followups and Secondary Surveys to Measure Progress

With indications of what did and did not work from last year to this year's results, you can build a roadmap for the coming year. For immediate changes and long-term programs that will adjust over time, FEVS data may not be helpful. Waiting for next year's FEVS results may be too long to ensure you are on the right track. The FEVS is very broad, so if you have questions about specific programs or the context of the answers you saw in the FEVS data, a secondary survey or a pulse survey program can useful tools to dig deeper.





## How to Get More from Your FEVS Data

If you are interested in learning more about how to obtain more value from FEVS results, build a more robust plan, and encourage action within your agency, we can support your efforts. EconSys has worked with numerous federal agencies for years to help them get more out of survey results.

The EconSys FEVS Survey Reporter tool offers extensive data-mining, filtering, and data visualization features to help HR managers dig deeper and uncover valuable insights. By helping agencies uncover opportunities for improvement, the Survey Reporter ensures you can take action and improve overall employee satisfaction.

Schedule a call with EconSys today to learn how our data analysis and evaluation solutions help many agencies gather greater insights from the FEVS and improve satisfaction over time.



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