Customer Satisfaction Survey: Recommendations for Capital Region Housing Corporation Edmonton

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Objective
Capital Region Housing Corporation, also known as CRH, is the largest social housing provider in Edmonton. CRH manages 4543 housing units, 604 near-market units and rent supplements among other services. As CRH shifts towards a more customer-centred organisation when delivering programs, it is interested in gaining feedback from its customers and measure satisfaction levels. The purpose of this project is to help Capital Region Housing develop a customer satisfaction survey and a plan for regular implementation and data collection and analysis.

Capital Region Housing has undertaken other initiatives to better understand their customers’ journey, such as mapping out the customer journey through CRH, conducting a wellness fair and reviewing its housing maintenance program. The customer satisfaction survey will provide CRH with a chance to get direct feedback from its customers on the programs and services they receive from CRH.

The main research question for this project was: how best should the CRH measure the experience of their customers with the organization. Subsequent questions looked at what tools would best measure if customers are getting the service they want and how they are being treated by CRH Staff.

Methodology and Methods
The literature review initially looked at defining customer satisfaction and this led to defining service quality as the research showed that service quality influenced customer satisfaction. Research into service quality found that customers were more interested in how the service was provided (functional service quality) than the technical delivery of the service. When researching private sector practices, research by Moyes et al., (2016, p. 456) into customers of small and mid-sized rural business found that customers were highly satisfied if a business delivered on the three R’s – Reliability, responsiveness and recovery. From the Citizen-Centered Service Network, Dinsdale and Marson (1999, p.33) identified five “drivers” of customer satisfaction, which were Timelines, Knowledge/Competence of staff, Timeliness, Courtesy, Fairness and Outcome. All these key learnings influenced the design of the survey.

This project took a mixed-methods approach to develop the customer satisfaction survey. Qualitative data collection methods were used to conduct the jurisdictional scan of best practices in social housing organisations across the country, in U.K. and Australia as well as focus groups to gain feedback on the pilot survey from CRH customers. The jurisdictional scan provided added insight into best practices in the housing sector that influenced the design of the survey and managed expectations on response rates for the survey. The pilot and secondary survey provided quantitative data to test the surveys developed from the learnings of the qualitative data.

Key Findings
Best practice as learned from the jurisdictional scan was to survey customers and most housing organisations used more than one method of survey delivery (either telephone and online or
telephone and mail-out surveys). As well, typical survey response rates ranged between 37% and 60% depending on the methods used. Finally, another concern raised by BC Housing was that customers did not fully understand the definition of how to measure customer satisfaction, which indicated that the survey questions should be designed to elicit responses on customer satisfaction from participants.

The surveys shared a common finding; participants responding positively to questions on service quality also tended to respond positively to questions on satisfaction. Complaints about the service tended to focus on the quality of the service (i.e., long wait times) and the attitude of the staff. Finally, some customers requested more attention on the security of social housing buildings.

Key themes that arose from the surveys and focus group were:

1. Accessibility of the survey to customers
2. Greater focus on service standards
3. Meeting the needs of the most vulnerable customers

These themes identified possible barriers that can be overcome to increase response rates. Increasing the accessibility of the survey to CRH customer can raise awareness and likely response rates. Placing more emphasis on service standards in the survey design can make it easier for customers to complete the survey. Finally, reporting back to the public on the survey results and resulting program changes can increase trust with vulnerable customers by demonstrating the impact of their responses.

Options to Consider and Recommendations

Three options were provided to address the issue of shifting the survey strategy towards increasing response rates. The three options are:

1. Single Prong Approach: Telephone Surveys Only – Surveys delivered over the phone with part-time staff recruited during summer to assist. Results of the survey would be announced in the annual report.

2. Double Prong Approach: Telephone and Online Surveys – Surveys delivered largely online with an option to complete over the phone. Translation services provided as needed. Key changes to programs that result from the analysis of survey response will be reported in the annual reports.

3. Multi Prong Approach: Telephone, Online and Mail-Out Surveys – Surveys delivered by mail, phone and online. Translation services provided as needed. Results of the survey and key changes to programs and services influenced by feedback from the survey will be reported annually. The next round of the survey will include questions to get feedback on the ability of those key changes to meet the needs of CRH’s customers.

The recommended Double Prong Approach will be implemented in the next calendar year and will require support from leadership for approval and budgeting. This option makes the most efficient use of resources. The hiring of university students for the summer will provide the required staffing resources to assist with delivery and analysis of the survey.
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1. INTRODUCTION

For the past few decades, many businesses, government and non-governmental organizations have found the need to continuously explore ways to improve their service quality. As Shemwell, Yavas and Bilgin point out in their 1998 paper on Customer-service provider relationships (p. 155), customer service is measured not only by the quality of service delivered but also by the satisfaction of the customers served. To measure customer satisfaction, one has to engage with the customers to understand how they perceived the service they received. As it becomes more customer-centred in the delivery of its programs and services, Capital Region Housing (CRH) in Edmonton realised it needed to get feedback from its customers on the quality of the services they received. They decided to establish a customer satisfaction survey using the learnings from similarly sized housing organizations in Canada and the world.

Capital Region Housing Corporation, also known as CRH, is the project client. CRH is an organization that manages 4543 community housing units, 604 near-market units and rent supplements among other services, but they do not currently have a mechanism to measure overall customer satisfaction. In their 2016 report, CRH states that “Customer success is our success” (p. 7) reflecting a more customer-focused approach to delivering community housing services. In their 2018 report (CRH, p.8), they have included the development of a customer satisfaction survey as one of their initiatives as part of their goal to “adopt a customer-focused model of delivery and engagement.” They also have a Customer Focus Policy that further strengthens the importance of this direction to the organization.

As they move to be more customer-focused, they decided to develop a customer satisfaction survey to get direct feedback from customers on what is working and how CRH can improve to better meet their needs. The pilot satisfaction survey developed and delivered through this project will provide a baseline for the organization to understand what kind of customer satisfaction survey they want to deliver and how to use the results to inform changes in service delivery within the organization.

The purpose of this project is to help Capital Region Housing develop a customer satisfaction survey and a plan for regular implementation and data collection and analysis. This involves researching how to measure customer satisfaction, examine what other similarly sized housing organizations are doing across the country and in the U.K. and Australia and finally, creating and delivering a pilot customer satisfaction survey for the organization. The findings from the pilot survey will be used with industry best practices to recommend a plan of action for how CRH should implement a customer satisfaction survey program.

Since CRH administers programs and services to a wide variety of customers with a wide variety of needs coming from different backgrounds, the main research question became:

- How best should the CRH measure the experience of their customers with the organization?

The following subsequent questions were examined in this project:

- What tools would best measure the following:
  - Are customers getting the service they want?
  - How are they being treated by CRH staff?
This project seeks to answer these questions through several stages. The first stage involves reviewing the literature on customer satisfaction measurement tools and conducting a jurisdictional scan of similarly sized housing organizations and internationally known social housing survey practices. Through the literature review and jurisdictional scan, lessons learned and best practices will be highlighted and applied to the design of the pilot customer satisfaction survey. The third stage would be the delivery of the survey to a random sample of participants followed by conducting a focus group to discuss the findings with a smaller group of participants who completed the survey. Findings from the survey and the literature review will be analysed to make recommendations to CRH on implementing a customer satisfaction survey protocol.

This report has nine sections. Section 2 provides background information on the project client. Section 3 will cover the literature review into the field of customer satisfaction surveys. Section 4 reviews the methodology, including the jurisdictional scan of similar social housing organizations’ survey practices, the pilot survey, focus group and the second survey. Section 5 reports on the findings from the jurisdictional scan. Section 6 will reports on the findings from the surveys and focus groups as Section 7 analyses the lessons learned from the findings before providing options and recommendations in Section 8. Section 9 will provide the conclusion for this project.


2. BACKGROUND

This section will provide background into the Capital Region Housing and the recent shifts in their strategic planning that led to the desire for developing a customer satisfaction survey. It will also identify the various points of interaction between customers and the CRH and review the Customer Journey Map, which informed some of the questions in the surveys. After which, a brief overview of survey practices by other social housing agencies will help identify areas of focus for the jurisdictional scan. Each part of this background also informed the development of the preliminary analytic framework. The framework defines the issues, drivers, challenges, methods and goals of CRH behind the process for the development of the customer satisfaction survey.

2.1 Organizational background

Originally established as the Edmonton Housing Authority in 1970, the organization became the Capital Region Housing Corporation on January 1, 1995, with the introduction of the Alberta Housing Act that same year (CRH, 2015, p.9). CRH is the largest service provider of social housing in the city of Edmonton (CRH, 2015, p. 9) and is most known for providing three types of housing services: community housing, near market housing and rent subsidies.

CRH acts as the landlord and property manager for 4,543 community housing units that are owned by the city, the province and the federal governments (CRH, 2016, p. 10). It owns 604 near market housing units that it offers to customers at 10 – 20% below market price. (CRH, 2016, p. 10). There are two rent subsidies that CRH provides; one that is paid directly to the tenant in a private market and the other is where the subsidy is on the unit and the private landlord gets paid the difference between the market rent and what the tenant can pay in rent as 30% of their gross income. (CRH, 2016, p.10). In the last year, CRH (2016, p. 8) has served over 25,000 people and yet it still has about 5,344 people on the waitlist. According to Jodie Sinnema (2015, p. 2), the waitlist for housing services from CRH has tripled from 1,200 people in 2014 to 4,000 in 2015. Now it is currently over 5,000 and CRH (2015, p. 9) attributes that growth to the downturn of the economy. CRH continues to receive about 3600 applications on average (E. de Vos, personal communication, June 18, 2019).

As times have changed, CRH has found the need to be more innovative in delivering services to customers. As they explain in their 2015 report (p. 9), CRH sees the increase in demands for social and affordable housing along with demands of repairs needed as creating an opportunity for the organization to be more innovative in how they deliver services while also increasing collaboration with community partners as much as possible to improve their service delivery. As seen in their 2016 report, they made progress on this front by improving policies and procedures to better align with legislative requirements; set up electronic funds transfers to better deliver rent subsidies; provided networking opportunities with industry, stakeholder, and government partners through various events; public consultations and workshops and more. (CRH, 2016, p. 13). In their 2016 report (p.7), CRH also states that they are committed to improving their communities and the customers they serve as well as providing consistent two-way communication with stakeholders. Developing a customer satisfaction survey will help the organization track how well its programs and services meet the needs of its customers as well as act as a mechanism to directly advise stakeholders the needs and thoughts of the customers.

2.2 Shifting from tenants to customers
CRH has been shifting from viewing users of its services as customers rather than tenants. This can be seen in their annual reports; in their 2014 annual report, the CEO reported that CRH had evolved to be more tenant-centric (CRH, p.4) whereas, in the 2016 report, the message from the leadership said “the experiences of our customers” (CRH, p. 5), also referring to tenants. This shows the shift of thinking from creating a culture that users of their service have chosen CRH rather than CRH being the only option.

CRH is not alone in shifting its attitude towards seeing tenants as customers. A big proponent of this shift is the Chartered Institute of Housing, a professional organization for the housing sector with members mainly from the UK, Canada and the Asia Pacific. They view clients as customers and in their 2013 report (Thornhill, p.22), they explain that by treating users as customers who have a choice, services offered are designed to promote and encourage customer engagement in the services affecting their lives. They further explain that by engaging with customers and collecting information on their experience with the organization, they were better able to improve service delivery (Thornhill, 2013, p.22).

Another example of this shift is found in a study from Omfax Systems, which reports on findings from a survey of over 1,000 senior customer service professionals from various social housing organizations regarding technology and training in providing customer service (Omfax System Ltd., 2016, p. 2). A discussion paper describing social housing as a consumer product and the need for innovation to respond to current market needs, Charles Lovatt (2012) interchangeably describes the tenants as consumers and customers accustomed to engaging with transaction systems in their daily lives, users of loyalty reward programs, price comparison sites, dynamic pricing techniques, and other types of business models.

This shift speaks to an understanding of the agency enjoyed by a social housing service user and the current market trend to engage with and empower that sense of agency. By engaging with customers and obtaining feedback, CRH hopes to build on the agency of their customers and have their voice be heard in the strategic, policy and program changes.

2.3 Points of Customer Interaction at the CRH

CRH has several points in which it engages with customers and potential customers. As the largest social housing provider in the city of Edmonton, the very first point of interaction occurs when potential customers contact the organization for information on services and the application process. This is when customers learn about what CRH offers and decides on what works best for them. Customers can then fill out an application form, which they can download online, and provide the application and necessary documentation in person to CRH. (“Applying at CRH”, 2016) As they wait for their application to be processed, they can contact CRH and may speak to a customer service clerk to find out about the status of their application or to make any other inquiries.

If customers are allocated housing or subsidy, they may deal with different staff depending on the type of program for which they have been approved. CRH offers four types of programs that customers can apply to community housing, near market housing, mixed-income housing and rent subsidy programs. At the time this project began, CRH was only offering three programs; community housing, near market housing and rent subsidy programs. Thus, this project will focus on the results of the survey in relation to those three programs. Customers of community housing...
and near market housing programs will engage with a placement clerk and housing clerks. Rent subsidy program customers would deal with the rent supplement clerk. They may also reach out to a manager with any concerns about the services they are or are not receiving as well as maintenance staff regarding the status of the residence provided by CRH. Thus, several points of interactions exist between customers and CRH staff where customer satisfaction can be assessed and measured.

### 2.4 Customer Engagement Initiatives

CRH has already undertaken some initiatives to evaluate the impact of its current mode of operations on its customers and to understand the needs of its customers. They have implemented a well-being survey to get input from customers that will be used in developing and implementing strategic initiatives to improve customer well-being (CRH Connections, 2017). They also host annual tenant meetings to further engage with their customers.

Additionally, CRH is reviewing its housing maintenance program that would focus on what could be done to improve access to maintenance services for current and future CRH customers. They have implemented a maintenance satisfaction survey and begun holding annual tenant meetings to increase engagement with their customers (E. de Vos, personal communication, February 22, 2019).

### 2.5 Customer Journey Map

CRH has also worked with JFIVE, Innovation Management Consultancy to create a Customer Journey Map. This map (see Figure 1) breaks down the customer experience at each stage of the community housing program; the process they went through; channels of communication with CRH; their goals, thoughts, and emotions; the problems they had with the process, and the consultants’ ideas for improvement. The map identifies seven stages in this program:

1. **Awareness** – pre-existing knowledge customers have on how to get safe housing and assistance with rent.
2. **Inquiry** – customers contact CRH for more information and see if CRH is the right choice.
3. **Application** – customers apply to CRH for a specific program or service.
4. **Placement** – placed into a community housing unit.
5. **Move-in** – moving in and settling into a new unit.
6. **Tenancy** – living in a community housing unit, which involves dealing with the landlord, maintenance staff, the community itself, and where CRH gains awareness of customers who are disruptive in the community.
7. **Move out** – where customers leave the housing unit and what that entails for the customer and CRH.

The most enlightening feedback at each stage concerning the customers’ emotions, experience and problems raised awareness of areas of improvement for CRH. The journey map helps confirm this by hearing it directly from customers and could also provide ideas for ways to improve their experience that could be brought forward to senior management and the Board.

This high-level overview helps identify expected areas of customer dissatisfaction with the services that CRH provides. The focus of the pilot customer satisfaction survey is to identify ways to uncover more information about the levels of client satisfaction with which parts of CRH’s service delivery and which needs are not yet fully met.
Figure 1 – Customer Journey Map
2.6 Overview of social housing survey practices

Measuring customer or tenant satisfaction is a common practice in the U.K., Australia, New Zealand, U.S. and the Netherlands (Pawson & Sosenko, 2011, p. 73). According to Pawson and Sosenko (2011, p. 73), tenant satisfaction surveys are a standard, nationally centralized practice in Australia, New Zealand and the U.S., while Dutch social housing landlords use surveys as one of the tools to promote how well they fare against external standards. In the U.K., the delivery of these satisfaction surveys is decentralized to individual housing associations to decide the model to use, how to deliver these surveys and how to collect and validate the results (Pawson & Sosenko, 2011, p. 74).

In Canada, several social housing organizations who have implemented or are beginning to implement tenant satisfaction surveys. Peel Living Housing and Toronto Community Housing have been running tenant satisfaction surveys for years. Capital Region Housing Corporation in Victoria just started its tenant satisfaction survey program in 2016 (CRHC, 2017). BC Housing and Housing Services Corporation (Ontario) have also run customer satisfaction survey(s). Within Alberta, CRH’s sister organization in Calgary, Calgary Housing Company launched its first tenant satisfaction survey in 2017 (Annual Report 2017 Affordable Homes for Calgarians, 2017, p.6). A more comprehensive jurisdictional scan in section 3 will discuss survey practices and lessons learned from national and international social housing organizations.

2.7 Summary and Preliminary Analytic Framework

As CRH has undertaken reviews on how it can improve service delivery and better serve customers, it became clear that the gap was a lack of information from the customers themselves. This finding is echoed by the practice of housing organizations across the country and internationally which use surveys to better understand how well the services they deliver meet the needs of their customers.

Essentially, CRH wishes to improve upon its current state of a top-down approach of service delivery to more of a circular cycle of service delivery and feedback to improve upon the services their customers receive. The focus of the pilot survey would be to gain insight from customers on the quality of the service they receive from CRH whenever they contact the organisation for assistance. The preliminary framework in Figure 2 on the next page outlines the issues, drivers, challenges, methods and goals of CRH underlying the process of developing a customer satisfaction survey.
Figure 2 – Preliminary Analytic Framework

Current State

CRH develops & delivers affordable housing programs and services

CRH connects with community partners, government stakeholders, and corporate partners to deliver programs & services

Clients receive programs & services

Future State

CRH develops & delivers services in tandem with stakeholders

Customers receive services

Issues

- Policies not informed by customer experience
- Inability to measure impact of services on customer
- Inability to determine quality of services or measure customer satisfaction

Transition from current state to future state

Drivers

- Changing organizational culture to be more customer focused
- Need for innovation
- Need to improve service quality
- Need to be transparent

Address Issues By

- Engaging with customers
- Developing customer journey map to understand customer experience
- Developing a mechanism to measure customer satisfaction

Develop Customer Satisfaction Survey

- By understanding the goals and desires of CRH
- Jurisdictional scan of similar sized affordable housing organizations for best practices
- Pilot survey with focus groups and collect feedback to improve survey

Challenges:
- Assessing needs for customers with language, literacy & cognitive barriers
- Assessing level of access to technologies amongst customers

Overcome:
- Conduct a scan of best practices for dealing with customers with barriers
- Review existing literature on customer satisfaction surveys to identify methods of greater accessibility and response rates
3. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review focuses on defining the concepts of customer satisfaction and service quality in academic literature and understanding how these are being measured in the public and private sectors. This information provides the base for more detailed research questions and the methodology of this project.

3.2 Defining Customer Satisfaction

Shemwell, Yavas and Bilgin (1998, p. 156) define satisfaction as “a combination of an affective, right-brained, feelings-based and subjective component with a cognitive, left-brained, evaluative and objective component.” They further specify through reference to the 1990 work of Lynch and Schuler (Shemwell et al., 1998, p.156) that customers define satisfaction differently depending on their ability to critically evaluate the service. For customers who are not subject matter experts in the field they interact with, they evaluate satisfaction based on other factors, such as the quality of human interaction they receive from the service provider (Shemwell et al., 1998, p.156).

In their study of service quality and customer satisfaction of customers of Turkish physicians (Shemwell, et al., 1998, p. 162), they found that service quality informs customer satisfaction and therefore, influences affective commitment (strength of emotional bonds), continuous commitment (to service provider) and complaint behaviour. They also found that Turkish patients were hesitant to challenge who they saw as a high-status person and so would complain to other patients, neighbours, friends or family instead(p. 158). This is pertinent to Capital Region Housing (CRH) because customers could complain to others rather than the service provider due to the difference in status and power. Finally, Shemwell, et al., (1998, pp. 158 – 159) focused on the relational exchanges rather than transactional outcomes since in doctor-patient relationships, the focus is more on the relation (measured more by trust and strength of emotional bonds). This is similar to CRH, which often has long-term relationships with customers and where trust plays an important role. In the case of CRH, customer satisfaction and meeting the needs of customers are important. Thus, one of the criteria that CRH will need to focus on in their survey is the quality of their service delivery in relation to customer satisfaction.

Service quality, therefore, is one of the criteria with which customers evaluate satisfaction. While service quality can influence customer satisfaction, service quality does not always equal customer satisfaction. Dabholkar, Shepherd and Thorpe (2000, p. 166) found through their longitudinal study of customer satisfaction, that customer satisfaction can be the influencing link between service quality and their behavioural intentions on continuing the service. This clearly demonstrates that the two concepts cannot be easily interchanged and are measured differently by customers. More importantly, it shows how customer satisfaction can progress from service quality and lead to an increased likelihood of customer loyalty. Furthermore, research by June Young Rha (2012, p. 1897) into intermediary customers of the public service sector (agencies that deliver services to the public on behalf of the government) found that service quality along with the design quality of policy and service design have a direct effect on customer satisfaction.

3.3 Defining Service Quality

Shemwell, et al., (1998, p. 156) note that unlike customer satisfaction, it is possible to evaluate service quality objectively. Parasumaran, Zeithaml and Berry (1988, p. 13) indicate that service quality, however, is more difficult to measure than goods quality as it is an intangible concept. They
developed the SERVQUAL model to measure service quality by gauging the perceptions customers have of quality service (Parasumaran, et al., 1988, p.13). Essentially, the SERVQUAL model focuses on measuring the customer’s perceptions and expectations with the perception of performance on the service they received instead of creating standardised, objective criteria of service quality (Parasumaran, et al., 1988, p. 15). They created this model to measure the perceived service quality as experienced by customers, identified as the differences between expectations for service quality and perceptions of the service received. They sought to provide retailers with a tool to track customer expectations of service quality and compare it to perceptions of service received (Parasumaran, et al., 1988, p. 30).

Shemwell, et al., (1998, p. 164) used the SERVQUAL method and referred to Gronroos (1984) suggestion of service quality being split into “technical quality (the what is done) and functional quality (how it is done)” to advise that doctors should focus more on the functional quality when making improvements. They clarified that doctors could focus on improving interpersonal interactions (such as seeing the patient’s file beforehand, greeting patient by name, explaining the diagnosis in clear language) as that would have a larger effect on improving their patients’ perceptions of service quality. This emphasis on functional quality refers to the customer’s perception of the service provider’s attitude. Moyes, Cano-Kouroklis and Scott (2015, p. 456) referenced studies on rural businesses (Moyes, 2012; Cano and Moyes, 2013) and noted that while rural business focused their resources into technical quality, customers themselves placed more value on the functional quality. In an industry, like CRH delivering services where relational exchanges have a higher influence on the customers’ continuous commitment to the service provider, focusing on the functional quality of the service has a higher value in establishing customer satisfaction.

As CRH provides its services under the authority of the Alberta Housing Act, it holds a unique position of providing services at the interest of three levels of government while not being part of the government. As such, it would be of interest to compare service quality and customer satisfaction measurement practices in the private sector and the public sector to identify measurement practices relevant to CRH.

3.4 Private Sector Practices

Ukko and Pekkola (2016) examined the performance – in service delivery and product – of a company from the customer’s perspective arguing that the customer should play a larger role in product or service performance evaluation based on its value-in-use rather than a firm’s objectives. Ukko and Pekkola (2016, p. 12) explain value-in-use based on the value to the customer being derived from how they used the product and/or its service throughout its life. This is relevant to CRH as they are attempting to gain more insight into the value of the services they provide by asking their customers to identify how to improve service delivery. Ukko and Pekkola (2016, p. 11) state that based on their findings, “enabling the customer to participate in the evaluation and measurement of service operations will generate not only new measures but also new services.” This is a positive indication that adding a service evaluation aspect to their survey can be influential in its creating new CRH services.

Moyes, Cano-Kouroklis and Scott (2016, p. 456) looked into whether customers of small and medium-sized businesses in rural areas placed a higher value in evaluations on the functional components of these businesses. Specifically, they emphasized what they call the three R’s –
reliability, responsiveness and recovery. Not only were Moyes et al., (2016, p. 460) able to see the three R’s in the three major dimensions of incidents of service experience that urban customers described, but also that customers will be highly satisfied if “they are treated well, receive what they expected to receive and the service provider effectively rectifies any failures and omissions.” Thus, not only did studies of rural and urban customers demonstrate the value of functionality of business rather than its technical components, but how influential the former is to customer satisfaction.

3.5 Public Sector Practices

In “Citizen/Client Surveys: Dispelling Myths and Redrawing Maps”, Dinsdale and Marson (1999, p. v) highlight a key difference between public and private sectors: while both sectors look to increase customer satisfaction, public sectors must also balance this need with protecting the public interest. Additionally, considering that customers of CRH’s services largely fall within the most vulnerable and marginalized members of Edmonton’s population, CRH would have to ensure that it protects the public interest in their desire to enhance customer satisfaction.

Dinsdale and Marson (1999, p. 14) indicate that in comparing surveys between public and private sectors of client satisfaction, often private sector surveys compared the specific private sector perceptions whereas public sectors compared overall government perceptions on the organisation in question. Dinsdale and Marson (1999, p. 14) found in the results of the 1992 Ontario survey, Best Value for Tax Dollars, that specific service experiences had higher ratings than that for the four specific sectors within public service, both of which had higher ratings than the performance ratings for Ontario Public Service in general. Thus, when they focused on comparing specific or recent service experiences within a public sector, it increased the ratings of that sector significantly. CRH, therefore, should focus on recent service experiences when surveying customers. Finally, they identified five “drivers” of customer satisfaction based on knowledge derived from other projects by Citizen-Centered Service Network that will inform CRH’s customer satisfaction survey, which are Timeliness, Knowledge/Competence of staff, Courtesy, Fairness and Outcome (Dinsdale and Marson, 1999, p. 33).

Wisniewski (2001, p. 380) points out that public sector organizations, such as community housing agencies, are often seen as providing service quality. This relates to the service drivers identified above in that customers are evaluating the quality of the services they receive rather than the product the organisation provides. Additionally, Wisniewski (2001, p. 381) highlighted that market research surveys tend to solely focus on how satisfied customers are with existing services, they are unable to identify if the services are meeting the needs and expectations of customers. CRH should find out about what its customers are looking for from the organisation to identify areas of improvement.

Kelly and Swindell (2002, p. 611) point out that surveys are used to demonstrate to the public that their needs are being taken seriously and as a way to “professionalize” the field of public administration. Thus, the public sector can then refer to the surveys to demonstrate how they included the needs of the public as they reform their services.

Moreover, in their paper on people, service and trust, Heintzman and Marson (2005, p. 557) noted that service quality is one of the determining factors of trust and confidence in government, and
supported this statement with reference to the conclusion that was found in a study by the Swedish government (Lundberg, 2003).

3.6 Modified Analytic Framework

Figure 3 extends Figure 2 to develop an analytic framework that combines the learnings from the background of the organisation’s needs and the preliminary literature review to describe the thought process behind the design of Capital Region Housing’s (CRH) customer satisfaction survey. The first half of the framework describes the transition that CRH is undergoing and the drivers behind the transition, resulting in the development of the customer satisfaction survey. The second half of the framework delves deeper into what forms a customer satisfaction survey.

The question “What is a customer satisfaction survey” is first answered through describing the background of what role customer satisfaction plays in relation to service quality and behavioural commitment. Customer satisfaction is influenced by service quality (technical meaning the service provided and transactional meaning how the service is provided). Customer satisfaction is divided into two categories, relational (as in the exchanges between the customer and service provider, such as customer service) and functional (the actual service provided, such as processing applications). This in turn influences behavioural commitment, which essentially breaks down into three categories: affective commitment, continuous commitment and complaint behaviour. Affective commitment describes the emotional connection the customer forms with the service provider in relation to the service, continuous commitment describes the desire of the customer to return to the service provider for additional services and complaint behaviour is essentially the propensity of the customer to file a complaint. (Shemwell et al., 1998, p.156) This background provides an understanding of the influence of service quality on customer satisfaction and the behavioural commitment customers have towards service providers.

Understanding how customer satisfaction is influenced and the value it has for behavioural commitment supports the drivers behind CRH’s transition to a future state with more input from customers. The survey itself will focus on measuring customer satisfaction using the five drivers of customer satisfaction as found by (Dinsdale and Marson, 1999, p. 33) through the results of projects conducted by the Citizen-Centered Service Network. The “end goal” with the customer satisfaction survey would be to measure how satisfied its customers are with the programs and services they receive from CRH. By understanding what high satisfaction means, CRH can analyze findings from the survey to see where it can improve upon existing programs and services.

The research from the preliminary literature review provides the skeleton for the pilot customer satisfaction survey. It provides the background for understanding the value of the survey to CRH, the drivers of customer satisfaction that the survey should focus on and an understanding of how to identify high satisfaction amongst its customers. The literature review conducted as part of the methodology will provide insights and best practices from similar sized organisation who have conducted customer/tenant satisfaction surveys.
Figure 3 – Analytic Framework
4.0 METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach; a combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods (Bryman, 2006, p. 98). The qualitative data collection methods involved a jurisdictional scan of best practices from other social housing organisations in Canada and internationally and discussions with some of the social housing organisations in Canada on their learnings. It also involved a focus group session following the pilot survey with participants who tested the survey. The quantitative data was collected from the employment of statistical procedures (Yilmaz, 2013, p. 311) through two pilot tests of the customer satisfaction survey. This approach was based on the “confirm and discover” rationale listed in Bryman’s report (2006, p. 105-107) which suggests using the qualitative data to develop the hypotheses for the results of the study and using the quantitative data collected to test them. This section will outline the methodologies of the jurisdictional scan, the pilot survey, the focus group and the final survey. Findings from these data collection methods will be discussed in the chapters following this section.

4.1 Jurisdictional Scan

The jurisdictional scan occurred in two parts: a review of existing literature and discussions with some Canadian Social Housing organizations. There is limited literature available on customer satisfaction survey practices within social housing organizations. Therefore, the literature review consisted mainly of work from reports on social housing survey practices in the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia. Essentially, Capital Region Housing is open to learning best practices from all other jurisdictions that provide social housing. Databases used to conduct the literature review included the UVic library database and Google Search. Key words used in the search were “social housing survey practices”, “social housing satisfaction surveys”, “social housing customer satisfaction surveys” and “social housing tenant satisfaction surveys”. Some resources were provided by the client as well and the bibliographies from those reports were used to find additional literature. The researcher also contacted the members of the Calgary Housing Company, Toronto Housing Company and Capital Region Housing (Victoria) involved in the research, development and delivery of customer satisfaction surveys.

4.2 Pilot Survey

Based on the findings from the preliminary literature review and the jurisdictional scan, a pilot survey was developed to measure customer satisfaction and test if the results of the survey proved to be informative to the organization. The survey was sent to a random sample of 30 participants from three groups of housing programs: community housing, near market housing and rent subsidy recipients. CRH must abide by the Freedom of Information Act by protecting the personal information of their customers, so the researcher worked with the Policy and Research Analysts at certain stages of the recruitment process. The Policy and Research Analyst at CRH drew a random sample of participants and contacted them to gain consent for the researcher to contact them about the study. A telephone script and e-mail invitation to the study, approved by HREB, was provided to the Policy and Research Analyst to assist in her recruitment of participants. The script and e-mail initiation can be found in Appendix 1 and 4 respectively.

The contact information of participants indicating interest in the survey was given directly to the researcher to ensure that CRH was not aware of who among that list agreed to participate in the pilot survey. An HREB approved consent form was sent via e-mail for participants to sign and send
back. Following the receipt of the signed consent form, a survey link was e-mailed to the participants. The survey was created and delivered through Survey Monkey. The majority of interested participants provided their telephone number and so, the researcher contacted them by phone, read through the consent form, and obtained verbal consent before conducting the survey over the telephone. Data collected from the telephone survey were manually entered into Survey Monkey.

To compensate for their time, participants were advised that they would be entered into a draw for a $25 gift card to Superstore should they agree to participate. Participants were also advised that should they withdraw, their data would not be used in the study. Participants were also advised that participation in the study would not affect their file with CRH.

Out of 25 potential participants, 12 participated in the pilot survey, indicating a 48% response rate. Amongst those surveyed, 4 participants belonged to the rent subsidy program, 5 belonged to the community housing program and 3 belonged to the near market housing program.

### 4.3 Focus Group

Short, Perecman and Curran (2006, p. 3) observed that it was not uncommon for quantitative researchers to use focus groups to interpret data collected using other quantitative data collection methods. What differentiates focus groups from a qualitative data collection process is if the data collection uses a structured interview rather than open-ended questions (Short, Perecman and Curran, 2006, p. 2). The focus group was conducted in a structured interview and the questions can be found in Appendix 6.

The focus group sought to identify improvements to the survey to make it more accessible to participants, easier to understand and better able to identify their concerns. When the researcher reached out to possible participants, she also asked if they would be interested in participating in the focus group. They were also advised that to compensate for their time, a $25 gift card to Superstore would be provided. Details of the focus group meeting were provided and a follow-up call to remind those who agreed to participate of the date, time and location of the meeting. Out of the 12 pilot survey participants, three agreed to participate and two advised they might be able to participate.

The focus group was held in the evening and the space was also a daycare centre so it had toys and books for children of participants. Only 2 participants of the pilot survey attended the focus group. Thus the focus group ran shorter than expected. Information received from the focus group was removed of any identifying data and provided to the client to discuss how to improve the survey. Due to the low turnout in the focus group, the client and researcher decided to conduct a secondary survey, including a question to get feedback from participants on improvements to the survey.

### 4.4 Second Survey

A second survey based on the feedback from the focus groups, lessons learned from the initial survey and with changes to the recruitment and consent process. The survey was revised to include a section introducing the survey, an implied consent form, and the questions were revised to make it more readable to participants. A few skip-logic functions were added to the survey to make it easier for participants to complete. Changes to the questions included adding questions to: clarify which program the participants belonged (near market, community housing or rent subsidies); reasons for
contacting CRH within the past six months; adding mail as an option for how participants contacted CRH; ease of comfort in notifying CRH of safety and security needs; on the attitude of staff at CRH; and asking participants for feedback on their survey. The revisions to the survey and the invitation were approved by the Human Research Ethics Board at the University of Victoria.

E-mail invitations were sent out to all customers in each program with e-mail addresses on file: 20 e-mails were sent out to customers of the near-market housing program, 279 e-mails out to community housing customers and 492 e-mails out to customers receiving rent subsidies. The Policy and Research Analyst at CRH sent the e-mails with the link to the survey out to customers on behalf of the researcher. The survey was kept open for about a month and a half to two months to provide customers enough time to complete the survey.

Survey participants were informed that they would be entered into a draw for a $25 gift card as compensation for their time. The consent form did advise that gift card should not be the incentive for their participation. To protect their identity from the organisation and to allow participants to choose if they wish to enter the draw, participants were asked at the end of their survey to notify the researcher if they wish to be entered into the draw. Participants who wish to be entered into the draw were asked to provide their e-mail address.

4.5 Strengths, Limitations and Risks

Data gathered through the surveys and focus groups were from CRH customers willing to participate. Additionally, since the second survey was conducted through e-mail, customers of CRH without access to the internet or an e-mail account did not have a chance to participate. Thus, the results of the data may not truly represent the needs of all CRH customers.

Moreover, although the phone surveys had a higher response rate, the researcher had to set time aside to call some participants more than once to complete the survey. This might not always be possible in the future depending on the time and resources available to CRH staff. Another concern with conducting surveys over the phone is that some participants might give more favourable responses than when completing surveys over the phone; also known as social desirability bias.
5. FINDINGS: JURISDICTIONAL SCAN

This section outlines the findings from the jurisdictional scan. The scan consisted of two parts: a review of literature on social housing survey practices and discussions with members of BC Housing and Capital Region Housing Victoria on their survey practices. Lessons learned and recommendations from the scan will be discussed in the conclusion.

5.1 Documentation Review

The documentation review focused on United Kingdom, Australia and Canada social housing organisations. Australia has a national approach towards surveying recipients of its social housing services whereas in Canada, it is the social housing organisation that determines whether or not to deliver a survey. United Kingdom has a national practice of surveying its social housing customers; however, the survey measurement process varies across the different social landlords (Pawson and Sosenko, 2011, p. 71).

Pawson and Sosenko (2011) examine the practice of tenant satisfaction surveys in the United Kingdom to see if the surveys published by social housing landlords can be relied upon to best determine the service quality of their organisations. They identify social housing as a public service field where “market competition is weak or absent” and have stated that in such public service fields, user satisfaction measurements have gained increasing relevance in their regulation (p. 71). Pawson and Sosenko (2011, p. 71) also highlight criticisms of using satisfaction measures in surveying tenants from the field of psychology, which are that a) survey participants rate satisfaction based on an expectation of service delivery and that b) people tend to adapt to a certain level of satisfaction and so once that is attained, then they have higher expectations of service quality. Pawson and Sosenko conclude that due to the ability of people to adapt and expect better service, tenants from a lower quality social housing landlord might provide a higher satisfaction rating than tenants from a better quality social housing landlord (p. 72).

According to Pawson and Sosenko (2011, p. 73), although social housing landlords in the United Kingdom (UK) were conducting tenant satisfaction surveys since at least the 1980s, they shifted to using a more centralized model – STATUS Survey model – around the 2000s. Thus, tenant satisfaction surveys have been standardized across the UK since the 2000s. Pawson and Sosenko (2011, p. 76) found through their research that the social housing organisations were inconsistent in how they conducted their surveys. The surveys were originally designed as a self-completion postal survey, but Housing Associations – which are separate from local [housing] authorities – were also allowed to conduct them through telephone or face to face interviews (Pawson and Sosenko, 2011, p. 73). In their analysis of surveys conducted in 2009 by a sample group of HAs, Pawson and Sosenko (2011, p. 74), found that the general response rate was 41 %, however, the average rate of response of 63% from more senior tenants. This is echoed in Australia’s analysis as well.

Australia conducts a National Social Housing Survey is a national survey that began with surveying public rental housing [PH] tenants in 1996 and by 2005, the survey included tenants of mainstream community housing [CM] and state owned and managed Indigenous housing [SOMIH] (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), 2015, p. 1). The survey was conducted as a self-completion mail-out questionnaire (AIHW, 2015, p. 5). Lonergan Research undertook the survey on behalf of AIHW and in 2014, they also included face to face interviews for two of the four SOMIH jurisdictions that were being surveyed (AIHW, 2015, p. 124). The survey seems to be
conducted every two years. According to the 2014 results, face to face interviews had a higher response rate (58%) compared to the mail out questionnaires (32%) (AIHW, 2015, p. 125). With the mail out questionnaires, reminder packs were sent twice for those respondents who had not yet completed the survey (AIHW, 2015, p. 131). Additionally, as in the UK, seniors (those aged 65 and over) had higher response rates than those younger and yet, those younger made up much of the age profile in the database of housing tenants across the various jurisdictions (AIHW, 2015, p. 7).

Unlike Australia and the United Kingdom, Canada has not adopted a standardized survey practice or a centralized survey mechanism of social housing customers. Instead, individual community housing agencies determine if they wish to survey their customers. Of those agencies, only Toronto Community Housing (TCH), the Ontario Housing Services Corporation (HSC) and BC Housing have published reports on the results of their surveys.

Toronto Community Housing (TCH) has conducted five resident satisfaction surveys since 2004 (The Nielsen Company, 2015, p. 14). Their survey methods have evolved, ranging from mail out surveys in 2004 and 2006 to telephone surveys during 2008 and 2012. (The Nielsen Company, 2015, p. 88). In 2015, The Nielsen Company (2015, p. 4) decided to conduct mail out/online surveys for two reasons: mail out surveys will provide an increased “likelihood” of “don’t know” responses and it helped avoid social desirability bias from respondents (The Nielsen Company, 2015, p. 4). Changes in the 2015 survey included an online option for respondents and an additional 8,450 packages were sent out to get closer to the intended response rate. All these attempts still yielded a response rate of 20% in 2015, less than the 40% response rate in 2004 and 2006, respectively (The Nielsen Company, 2015, p.88). Thus, The Nielsen Company (2015, p. 90) recommended that TCH use a mixed methods approach of mail, phone and online surveys to maximize the opportunities for residents to respond at their ease.

Ontario Housing Services Corporation (HSC) conducted a pilot satisfaction survey from 2011 to June 2013 to test a standardized social resident satisfaction survey (Oliveira, 2014, p. 6). Only five areas participated; Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services, Ottawa Community Housing, Thunder Bay District Social Services Administration Board, 15 Thorncliffe Park Co-operative Homes and the City of Peterborough (Oliveira, 2014, p. 8). Except for Ottawa Community Housing which conducted the survey through telephone interviews, all other agencies delivered self-completion surveys through mail (Oliveira, 2014, p. 19). The response rate for the mail out surveys ranged from 26 to 61%, depending on the agency, and 36% by phone for Ottawa Community Housing (Oliveira, 2014, p.12). For the mail out surveys, a second mailing option was included as a reminder (Oliveira, 2014, p. 12). Oliveira (2014, p. 11) reported that the decision to implement mail out surveys included increased privacy of respondents, decrease in cost compared to telephone surveys and mail out surveys being quicker to implement. Oliveira (2014) recommended including shorter surveys (p. 10), conducting surveys every two years, using a standard set of core questions, and suggested a self-completion postal survey as it was found to be most effective with regards to cost and implementation (p. 33).

At the time of the jurisdictional scan, Calgary Housing Company was developing its pilot tenant satisfaction survey. They published a report which was prepared by NRG Research Group (NRG) and presented December 2017 (NRG, 2017, p. 1). The survey was conducted through phone during the month of October 2017 of a sample of 502 tenants with a 60% response rate (NRG, 2017, p.2). Additionally, the survey was available online and tenants had the option of completing the survey in English, French, Punjabi or Chinese (NRG, 2017, p.2). Based on the survey results, NRG (2014,
pp. 2-3) recommended that tenants be informed on how Calgary Housing Company will act on their feedback, that survey be maintained through phone with an online option, that translations be considered on a cost/benefit bases as only one respondent who requested a translated survey responded within the survey period, and to provide respondents more time to respond.

5.2 Phone Discussions
To be able to understand survey practices in BC, staff at BC Housing and Capital Region Housing Victoria were contacted.

According to its 2011/2012 report, BC housing conducted an annual survey and in 2011, the survey was mailed out to tenants and had a 31% response rate (BC Housing, 2012, p. 30). An independent research firm looked at the survey data and reported back to BC Housing on key areas and that the purpose of the survey moved from measuring satisfaction to measuring service standards. The latter was a result of customers not always understanding what customer satisfaction meant.

Capital Region Housing Victoria conducted its first customer satisfaction survey in 2016. The survey was delivered door-to-door through caretakers and the organisation created mailboxes for customers to drop off their survey if they could not mail it back. The survey was also made available online for those who had access to the internet and it was structures so that only one member per household completed the survey. The response rate was 37% and they hoped to conduct the surveys biannually. Due to BC Privacy laws, CRH could not use survey monkey and so had their IT department create the survey. CRHV drew on research from a variety of satisfaction surveys on key areas of customer service that a staff member knew the CRHV wanted to examine. There was a higher response rate from seniors; they formed about 50% of responses.

5.3 Conclusion
Although Canadian social housing agencies are newer to the practice of conducting customer satisfaction surveys compared to international housing agencies, they share similar approaches in survey delivery methods and response rates. The jurisdictional scan proved useful in understanding best practices, providing an estimation of an expected response rate as well as tips to improve the survey. The revised survey, following client edits, was provided to HREB for ethical approval, which was received in October 2017.
6.0 FINDINGS: PILOT SURVEY

The design of the pilot survey was drawn from the literature review and jurisdictional scan. Its purpose was to test the survey design to measure the clarity of the questions and to get feedback on the survey design by participants through a focus group. About twelve participants consented to participate. Of those twelve, four were receiving rent subsidies, five were in community housing and three were in near market housing. Thus, the group was representative of the population by housing program. Eleven participants completed the survey over the phone. In total, participants answered seventeen questions. This section presents the findings from the survey. The full format of the survey can be found in Appendix 5.

6.1 Reason for Inquiry

Participants were asked to identify a reason for contacting CRH within the past six months. Two-thirds of the participants answered this question and their results are presented in Figure 4 below. The most common reason to contact CRH was in regards to a general inquiry (44%), followed by an inquiry into the rent adjustment (22%) or the rental agreement (22%).

Figure 4 - Reasons for contacting CRH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason for Inquiry</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General question</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About the move-in process</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions regarding tenant lease</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions about rent subsidy agreement</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Request a rent adjustment</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regarding an income review</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check on the status of housing</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check on the status of your application</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.2 One Inquiry Required

This section focused on identifying service standards for those participants who only had to contact CRH once with regards to their inquiry.

Participants were asked to identify if they made their inquiry by phone, e-mail or in person and based on the method of inquiry, follow up questions were given to identify how quickly they received a reply and if they had to wait for any length of time.

Participants either made their inquiry by phone (44%) or in person (56%).

6.3 Multiple Inquiries Needed

This section was directed at participants who contacted CRH more than once to address their issue. 42% of participants answered this question and among them, 60% contacted CRH twice while 40% had to contact CRH three times regarding their inquiry. Participants were asked how they made these inquiries and their answers can be found in Figure 07 below. It seems that the most popular method was to visit CRH in person (60%).
Participants were then asked how soon they received a response and Figure 6 below shows that 50% of participants received an answer right away.

For those participants who did not receive an answer right away, they were asked to provide a comment as to the cause for the delay. Reasons included the office being closed and being asked to call back without yet having a chance to speak to a clerk.

### 6.4 Inquiry Experience

This section pertained to all respondents with regards to their experience to the inquiries they had made. Response rates varied from 50% to 80% and should be considered when interpreting the data.
A 5 point Likert scale system was used to measure if respondents received clear answers to their questions; felt all of their concerns were addressed and if the staff member was knowledgeable. An overview of the data gathered is presented in Figure 7.

Figure 7 – Clarity of Responses.

Based on the figure above, the majority of respondents reported positively regarding the knowledgeability and capability of the staff they dealt with to address their concerns and provide answers.

Participants were asked if they felt the outcome was fair; if they had to speak to a manager for further assistance; if they were happy with the result and if they learned any surprising information. Figure 8 presents the data from these questions.

Figure 8 – Feedback on Responses.

Most of the respondents felt that the outcome was fair and they were happy with the result. Few respondents had to escalate their inquiry up to the manager. Only some respondents felt they learned new information and it was with regards to formulas for rent calculation.
6.5 Quality of Overall Service

This next section pertained to the overall service that CRH provides and applied to all participants. The questions focused on other areas of interest for CRH-customer relations, such as ease in notifying CRH of changes, inclusivity of CRH services, rent subsidy programs and overall customer satisfaction. Response rates varied between questions and so the data will be presented by question.

Participants were first asked to advise how easy they found to advice CRH of any changes to their housing status or needs (see Appendix 5, Q14). 83% of participants responded to this question.

Figure 9 below show that 90% of responses ranged from somewhat easy to very easy. The question included a comment box asking participants to explain their answers. The most common challenges respondents reported facing were either difficulty trying to get a hold of someone when calling or difficulty reaching their landlord or building manager.

Figure 9 – Ease in notifying CRH

The next question elicits suggestions on how CRH could make their services more inclusive and accessible to customers (see Appendix 5, Q15.). All participants responded. Suggestions included making buildings and units more accessible for those with physical disabilities and requests to increase overall security.

Participants were asked if they had received rent subsidies and if they have had any problems or questions about the process (see Appendix 6, Q16.) Half of the participants (50%) responded and none had any issues.

The last question was designed as a Likert scale question asking participants to identify their overall satisfaction with CRH services. All participants responded and Figure 10 shows that most participants were satisfied with the overall service they received from CRH.
This question included a comment box asking participants for suggestions on how CRH could improve service delivery. Suggestions included:

- increasing the number of staff available to answer the phone line
- adding a resident manager to keep track of building equipment and maintenance
- ensure building is secure 24 hours if there is a sign stating as such and
- implement an online complaint system to report maintenance issues.

6.6 Summary

Twelve out of the twenty-six potential candidates recruited for this survey agreed to participate resulting in a response rate of 46%. The most common reasons for contacting CRH were in regards to rent subsidy agreements, rent adjustments and income reviews. Pilot survey participants seemed to prefer contacting CRH by phone or in person.

In terms of standards of service, CRH received largely positive responses on the clarity of answers; concerns being addressed; knowledgeability of staff; perceptions of fair outcomes; happiness with the result of the inquiry and overall satisfaction with services rendered. Few participants had inquiries that escalated to management level. Key themes that did emerge from the survey were requests for: lower wait times in person and over the phone; increase accessibility of buildings and services to those with various physical abilities; and increase security of residences.

The results, while informative, cannot be extrapolated to the overall population of CRH customers as the sample size is too small to be considered representative of all CRH customers. This, however, can be overcome by using the insight gathered here in the development of the final survey questions to then identify if other CRH customers feel similarly.
7. FINDINGS: FOCUS GROUP

The focus groups elicited feedback on the design of the survey from CRH’s customers and improvements to the survey to make it more relevant in capturing their needs. The researcher had hoped to hold three focus group sessions of ten participants each from the three CRH programs of housing of interest in this project (community housing, near market housing and rent subsidy programs). Only two participants participated in the focus group. Their responses will be presented in full. The questionnaire for the focus group can be found in Appendix 6.

7.1 Initial Thoughts on the Survey and Delivery Medium

Initial thoughts of the survey were that it was quick, easy to understand and that the questions were typical of a satisfaction survey. Participants did, however, suggest trying to make the questions more “user-friendly”. By which they meant using vocabulary they could understand, such as information in lieu of data.

Participants preferred the phone or mail out surveys to online or in person surveys as they found the former to be more accessible. When asked what type of delivery medium would prevent them from completing the survey, participants pointed to e-mail surveys. There were two reasons: they are not accessible to those who do not have computers, and some people from different cultures may not understand the survey. They felt that the best medium would be phone surveys as the caller could help respondents better interpret the survey questions.

7.2 Questions

The next section focused on obtaining feedback on the questions in the survey. Participants felt that the questions were appropriate and not too personal. Participants were asked if the questions provided them with an opportunity to give as much feedback as possible and they agreed. Participants also advised that they felt that the questions were fairly clear.

Finally, participants were asked if there were any additional questions they would like to see. Participants advised that they would like to see questions on the security/safety of the residence and on the status of renovations and maintenance.

7.3 Suggestions for Improvements

Participants were asked about what would prevent them from completing the survey, suggestions to improve the survey and if they have any questions or concerns over the survey. According to the participants, if the survey was delivered by phone, then a bad attitude of the caller would prevent them from completing the survey. The only improvement suggested was to use less “fancy” words in the survey so that it was easier to understand. When asked if they had any questions or concerns about the survey, participants advised they had none.

7.4 Timelines and Results

Responses from the participants were split between not caring about knowing of the results of surveys and wanting the survey results be acted upon.

As for timelines, participants suggested different times of the day to deliver the survey (during the daytime for one and any time of the day for the other). They advised they would most likely
complete the survey if they receive a survey request following receipt of a service from CRH. When asked how often they think the survey should be conducted, participants recommended for it to be done every three months.

7.5 Summary

Only two participants in the focus group, so it is highly unlikely that the findings of the focus group could be extrapolated to the entire CRH customer base. The participants may also have been holding back on providing more honest answers in the presence of the researcher.

As a result, the researcher recommended conducting a second survey, revising it to include lessons learned from the first survey and suggestions from the focus group to better test the validity of the data. This recommendation was accepted by the project client and a second survey was built to further test the survey. The next section reviews the findings from the second survey.
8. FINDINGS: SECOND SURVEY

The survey was sent to all customers of the three housing programs (community; near market and rent subsidy) with an e-mail on file with CRH. Of those e-mailed, sixty four customers participated in the response. As CRH had 791 e-mails on file, this indicates an 8% response rate. This section will briefly discuss the results of the survey. A copy of the survey is in Appendix 7.

8.1 General Information

Similar to the first survey, participants were asked to identify the type of services they were receiving from CRH. The majority of participants received rent subsidies (67%), followed by those living in community housing (28%) and those in the near market housing program (nearly 5%).

As well, participants were also asked to select from a list of possible reasons for contacting CRH within the last six months. Figure 1 below reflects their responses.

Figure 1 – Reason for Inquiry

![Bar chart showing the reasons for contacting CRH](chart)

Over 90% of participants responded to this question and of that group, nearly 40% of them had not contacted CRH in the past six months. As for the rest, the most popular reasons for contacting CRH was to check on the status of their application, an income review or “other” reasons.

8.2 One Inquiry Required

This section was directed towards participants who only had to contact CRH once to get an answer to their inquiry. In such, participants were asked to self-identify (see Q3, Appendix 7). Those who contacted CRH more than once were automatically directed – using a skip function in the survey – to the “Multiple Inquiries” page. 58% of respondents advised they only had to contact CRH once regarding their inquiry.

The rest of this section focuses on identifying the most often used mediums of contacting CRH and response waiting times. Of those who contacted CRH once regarding their inquiry, 65% of them contacted CRH by phone, 25% in person and 10% by e-mail. None contacted CRH by mail. Participants were asked follow up questions based on the medium of communication they used to contact CRH to better understand the standards of service they received.
About 23% of participants had contacted CRH once and by phone. They were asked to advise if their call was answered immediately or if they were put on hold (and for how long) or if they had to wait for a call back (and how long). Figure 12 below briefly highlights their responses.

Figure 12 – Phone – Standards of Service

Figure 12 above shows that the majority of participants had their call answered right away. Participants kept on hold advised that they were either on hold for between three to about thirty minutes or they left a message. Among those who were told that someone would call them back, return times ranged between the next day to a few days.

The next question was directed at participants who contacted CRH by e-mail. Among those answering this question, 73% received a reply e-mail. Participants reported receiving an e-mail back from within half an hour to a few days (see Figure 13).

Figure 13 – E-mail Response Times

The next question was directed at those participants who contacted CRH in person. About 60% reported that they met a staff member right away. For those who had to wait, their wait time was between ten to twenty minutes in line.
Although no participants advised contacting CRH by mail, about 7% of survey participants answered this question. 80% of them reported hearing back from CRH and 60% of them received a response about one week later. When asked which medium CRH used to respond to their inquiry, 40% of participants responded and advised they were contacted by e-mail.

### 8.3 Multiple Inquiries Required

This section focused on participants who had to contact CRH more than once to receive an answer. Participants were first asked to identify how many times they had to contact CRH with regards to their inquiry. Figure 14 shows that most respondents made between 2 to 4 inquiries.

**Figure 14 – Frequency of inquiries**

Participants were then asked to select if they made these inquiries by phone, e-mail, mail or in person. Figure 15 below shows that none of the participants contacted CRH by mail and most preferred to contact CRH by phone. Participants were also offered a chance to provide comments. Only one person chose to comment.

**Figure 15 – Contact Medium**

Finally, participants were asked to select amongst a range of timing to identify how soon they received a response. Figure 16 below shows that most respondents received a response either right away or within 24 hours.
A comment box was provided to elicit more information on possible delays. Respondents advised that the delays they faced were either due to long line ups (50%) at the office or an unknown reason (50%).

8.4 Inquiry Experience
The next section focused on the quality of the inquiry experience. Data was collected and reported with a mix of Likert scale questions, binary questions and open ended questions.

Responses to those questions can be found in Figure 16 below and they indicate that interactions with CRH were largely positive with regards to clarity of answers received; all concerns being addressed and knowledgeability of staff.

Figure 17 – Interactions with CRH staff

Participants were asked about the fairness of the outcome of their inquiry and about 68% of them answered. Their answers were grouped into four categories. Figure 18 below shows that while
mostly responded positively and felt the outcome was fair, some participants were still awaiting an answer at the time they participated in the survey.

Figure 18 – Outcome Fairness

When asked if they had to speak to a manager to get more information, 84% answering this question advised that they did not have to speak to a manager.

Survey participants were then asked if they were happy with the results of their service. About 67% of participants answered this question, and among them, 77% were happy with the results of their service. When asked to state what they were happy about, the most common reasons given were staff seemed knowledgeable, friendly, and polite. Other words that came up were: understanding, prompt, helpful, patient and efficient.

If they were not happy with the results of their service, participants were asked to suggest what CRH could do to improve. Some participants stated what bothered them (rudeness of staff; wait times for response; income calculation for pensions) and others suggested improvements (e.g., returning e-mails and phone calls; increase accessibility for people with disabilities; and permit digital copies to be submitted for review).

The last question was open-ended, intended to uncover if participants learnt any surprising information while interacting with the clerk. Of those who answered, about 17% felt that they did. Most answering in the affirmative did not provide any additional information about what they found surprising. About 5% answered “not applicable”.

8.5 General Service Questions
This section focused on better understanding the overall service quality of CRH and the same questions in the pilot survey used in this survey. A few questions were added in light of the information raised through the focus group, such as one on advising CRH of safety and security needs as well as questions on the attitude of CRH staff.

The first question (Appendix 7, Q. 19) inquired into the ease participants felt in informing CRH of any changes to their housing status or needs. It was framed as a Likert Scale with a comment box added for participants to explain their answer. 69% of participants answered this question, but only 62% of those who answered the question also provided comments explaining their answer. Figure 19 below shows that most found it somewhat easy or easy to notify CRH.
Within the comment box, about 14% of participants advised that they did not have any changes to report. 10% of participants who commented remarked that the staff member they dealt with was very helpful. Among the reasons given for the difficulty in notifying changes included limited office hours and phone lines being busy.

Participants were asked how comfortable they felt talking to CRH about their safety and security needs. See Appendix 7, Q. 20 for the full question. A Likert scale was used to collect answers as well as a comment box for participants to explain their answer. Figure 20 shows that about 69% of participants answered this question. Among them, most participants felt comfortable or very comfortable notifying CRH of their safety and security needs.

The comment box in this question provided useful in better understanding the needs of customers. About 37% provided comments. A few themes arose such as: participants felt their current safety needs were met; some have never been asked this question before; or they felt that CRH would not
care. The themes do not encompass the entirety of the comments and so the comments are worth another look by CRH.

The next question (see Appendix 7, Q. 21) asked participants if there were any areas that CRH could learn more about in order to better serve customers. Examples were given the question to assist participants to answer the question (such as language services, income assistance, assisted living and inclusion). The question also included a comment box for responses. Just over half of participants answered this question and 37% of them had no suggestions to make. Some participants were not sure what to suggest. Figure 21 below presents an overview of the themes that emerged.

Figure 21 – Areas for CRH to Increase Awareness

Other suggestions included providing resources for those with mental health illnesses; having language services (including indigenous); increased knowledge of coops; reducing waiting period for seniors; designating some buildings a smokes/scent free for people with environmental sensitivities and allergies; increase building security; and providing programs for seniors to feel more wanted; more staff at the front counter to reduce waiting lines.

The next set of questions (Q. 22, Appendix 7) focused on attitude. CRH was interested in understanding what its customers defined as a “good attitude”; if there were any nonverbal factors that they would add to their definition of a “good attitude” and if they felt they received a good attitude from the CRH staff member assisting them. Many of the participants who responded provided similar markers of a “good attitude”. 18% of participants answered yes, which could mean they interpreted the question as asking if they felt that the staff at CRH they dealt with had a good attitude. The most popular markers of a good attitude were:

- Friendliness
- Positivity
- Helpfulness
- Politeness
- Active Listening
- Empathy
- Understanding
• Respectful
• Smiling
• Kindness
• Patience

Additional one-off responses were clarity when answering questions, summarizing, clarifying request, knowledgeable and being sensitive to people’s culture.

Participants were then asked to advise if there was a specific tone of voice, body language or any other factor that they would add to their definition above of a good attitude. Just over half of participants answered this question with 20% indicating that they had nothing further to add, and 5% of participants indicating the question was too difficult to answer and were not sure how to respond.

The most frequently suggested nonverbal markers of a “good attitude” were:

• Being Calm
• Smiling
• Happiness
• Politeness
• Friendliness Professional
• Eye contact

Other one off suggestions were to be respectful, non-judgemental, courteous, be helpful, listen, sound matter of fact, not be rude, have open body language or have a neutral tone of voice. Another 11% of participants just answered yes.

Next participants were asked CRH staff had a good attitude when assisting them and why or why not. About 61% of participants answered this question. Figure 22 below shows that the majority felt that the CRH staff they dealt with had a good attitude.

Figure 22 – Receive Good Attitude from CRH.

Some participants advised that it depended on who they got on the phone (7%) or depended on the day (5%). One answer was that it did not apply to their circumstance.
Finally, participants were asked to suggest how CRH staff could improve their attitude when providing customer service. Just over half the participants responded with answers mostly split (42% did not have any suggestions to provide while another 42% felt that there could be improvements). Figure 23 below reports on the four major suggestions participants made on how CRH staff could improve their attitude.

**Figure 23 – Suggestions to Improve Attitude**

![Bar Chart](chart.png)

Participants were then asked to self-identify if they were receiving rent subsidies from CRH and if so, to advise if they have had any problems with this process (Q. 23, Appendix 7). About 57% of participants answered this question and among those who answered, 40% were not receiving rent subsidies. Among the remaining 59% of participants who were receiving rent subsidies, nearly 77% of them advised that they had no issues with how the subsidy process.

A few participants did have concerns, which included wishing that the deposit was going directly to the landlord; felt that they were trying to be forced into accepting directing deposits and a wish that the deposits came a week earlier.

Participants were asked to rate how satisfied with the overall customer service they received from CRH (Q. 24, Appendix 7). The question was formatted as a Likert Scale question and included a comment box for participants to make suggestions to improve service delivery. 72% of participants answered this question. Figure 24 below outlines participants rating of overall satisfaction.

**Figure 24 – Overall Satisfaction**

![Bar Chart](chart.png)
Suggestions for improvement of service delivery included hiring more staff, especially for the frontline; return inquiries promptly; inform clients of changes in case workers and streamline and quicken the application process.

The last question asked participants to share their thoughts on the survey as well as ideas for improvement (Q. 25, Appendix 7). While 41% of participants responded to this question, 85% of them did not have any suggestions. The suggestions for improvement were:

- Adding questions to identify if CRH’s office is comfortable and accessible for those with disabilities;
- Improve the survey questions to be shorter and easier to understand;
- Have a consistent rating scale (either 4 points or 5 points);
- Conduct the survey one on one or provide rewards and
- Have less open ended questions unless the person has a complaint.

8.5 Summary

This survey had more engagement than the first survey even with an eight percent response rate simply because more CRH customers participated.

The survey had findings similar to the pilot survey. For example, some of the most common inquiries included inquiring into the income review. Additionally, most participants contacted CRH by phone similar to those who completed the pilot survey. In terms of service quality, CRH received largely positive answers on the clarity of answers; all concerns being addressed; knowledgeability of staff; fairness of inquiry outcome; happiness with results of services; ease in notifying CRH of changes; staff having a good attitude and overall satisfaction with services received. As well, similar to the pilot survey, few cases were escalated to the manager.

Suggestions were made to improve the service and responses to comfort participants had in notifying CRH of their safety and security needs. Some participants did not feel that CRH was interested in that information which indicates that CRH can be more proactive in demonstrating an interest in the safety and security needs of their customers.

Finally, the second survey provided added insight into how the survey could be further improved to be more beneficial through the organisation. This will be discussed in the next chapter.
9. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

This section reviews the findings from the literature review, pilot survey, focus group and secondary survey to identify what worked well in the current design and how the survey could be further improved before being provided as a final product to Capital Region Housing. Following the analysis of the findings, central themes as raised through this project will be identified before concluding by discussing the implications developing of options for recommendation.

9.1 Review findings from all lines of evidence and literature review

When beginning this research project, the main research question became, “How best should CRH measure the experience of their customers with the organisation?” The best practice within the social housing sector, as found in the jurisdictional scan, was to measure customer experience and more specifically, customer satisfaction through surveys.

The findings from the jurisdictional scan assisted in managing expectations on response rates in that typically, surveys conducted by other housing organisations received a response rate between 37% and 60% depending on the methods used. Higher response rates typically reflect more than one method of survey delivery, such as a combination of online and phone surveys or a combination of mail out and phone surveys. The organisational background also assisted in managing expectations on survey response rates among CRH customers. The well-being survey conducted in 2017 had a response rate of 9% (CRH, 2018, p. 1). A key learning stemmed from Pawson and Sosenko (2011, p. 72) recommendation for surveys to identify expectations of customers when measuring customer satisfaction based on the ability of people to adapt and expect better service. Thus, the surveys included Likert scale questions and multiple choice options.

The pilot survey had an even distribution of participants from the three CRH housing programs (social housing, rent subsidies and near market housing). Nearly all participants opted to complete the survey over the phone. The findings from the pilot survey seem to support the model indicated by Shemwell et al., (1998, p.162) of service quality informing customer satisfaction and thus, complaint behaviour. More specifically, service quality is defined as how the service was provided as well as the service that was provided (Shemwell et al., 1998, p. 164). Service quality was measured in the pilot survey using questions directed at service standards (i.e., response times, knowledgeable of staff, etc.). Participants responding positively to questions on service quality also tended to respond positively to questions on satisfaction (i.e., happiness with result; fairness of outcome, overall satisfaction with the service). Complaints about the service tended to focus on quality of the service (i.e., long wait times). Finally, some customers requested more attention on the security of social housing buildings. A question was added to the second survey to see if this was a concern for other participants and to identify how comfortable customers felt raising concerns about security and safety to CRH.

The focus group further supported the need for a second survey, mainly due to the low participation rate requiring another method to get more feedback. Key findings from the focus group included: feedback advising that the language in the survey be “user-friendly” (easy to understand); preference on surveys being delivered by phone or mail since that was more accessible; and a request from focus group participants for questions on the security/safety of the residence and status of renovations. Participants advised if they were doing the survey over the phone and the surveyor had a bad attitude, it would prevent them from completing the survey. This
further supports the value of functional aspects of service delivery (the how of service delivery) and its importance in experiences of customer satisfaction.

The second survey provided added value in many ways. First, it had a larger number of participants than the focus group or pilot survey, which led to more data. It had more participants from the near market and rent subsidy programs compared to the social housing programs, suggesting that such customers may be more likely to complete surveys online than social housing customers. There was also a difference in the consistency of responses to questions: the pilot survey was conducted over the phone, while the second survey was completed online. The Likert scale scoring of responses increased the scoring quality. The second survey supported the findings of the first survey which mirrors the Shemwell et al., (1998, p. 162) point of customer satisfaction being influenced by service quality. The second survey had more questions focusing on functional service quality (e.g., attitude of staff, how customers define a good attitude, timeliness of responses, helpfulness of staff, knowledgeable ability of staff and quality of overall service). Areas of improvement largely centered around wait times for responses and the attitude of CRH staff when delivering services, consistent with the 5 drivers of customer satisfaction (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999, p.3), which are: timeliness, knowledge/competence, fairness, courtesy, and outcome). Each driver was measured in the second survey and customers naturally referred to one or more of them when suggesting improvements to how CRH delivers it services.

9.2 Looking Across Lines of Evidence: Themes to Consider

Each line of evidence provided value and direction for the subsequent method of research; the jurisdictional scan for the survey, the survey for the focus group and so on. Throughout the jurisdictional scan, surveys and focus groups, three themes in particular arose that reflected the needs of customers and their ability to participate and trust in the customer satisfaction survey process: accessibility of the survey to customers; greater focus on service standards; and meeting the needs of the most vulnerable customers.

Theme 1: Accessibility of the survey to customers

The theme of accessibility relates to the method in how the survey was delivered and consideration of other tools that will make it more accessible to CRH customers. The easier the survey is for CRH customers to access, the higher the possible response rates.

The jurisdictional scan of social housing agency survey practices in Canada indicated that many of them recommended deliver the surveys through more than one medium to increase response rates (The Neilsen Company, 2015, p. 90; NRG, 2014, pp. 2-3; CRHV). There are many reasons to support using a mixed methods approach to delivering the survey. Many customers do not have access to computers or Internet and so would prefer to complete the survey by mail or phone. For some customers, phone surveys offer participants the opportunity to seek clarity for questions and translation. Considering that nearly all participants preferred conducting the pilot survey over the phone and that only a small portion of the near-market customers had e-mails on file, an online survey does not seem to be accessible to many CRH customers. Focus group participants also thought that phone or mail out surveys would be more accessible.

Some social housing organisations suggested providing tools to assist customers with language barriers to complete the survey (i.e., Calgary Housing Corporation). This would increase accessibility of the survey to all CRH customers. This finding from the pilot surveys since some
participants did have a language barrier, which comments in the second survey hinted. Furthermore, CRH is already aware and providing options to assist customers facing language barriers when accessing services. In their Tenant Well-Being Community Report (2018, p. 6), they reported launching a Language phoneline to assist customers overcome language barriers as one of the initiatives underway to improving wellbeing of their customers.

Finally, using software to assess the readability of the survey would be useful to CRH. Through the pilot survey, the researcher often found that sometimes an explanation was required to assist participants to better understand the question. Focus group participants asked to make the survey more “user friendly” by not using “fancy” words like data. This indicated that the vocabulary would have to be at a 6th to 8th grade reading level for the survey to be more “user friendly”. The researcher used Readable.io to assist in ensuring that the second survey was readable to participants.

**Theme 2: Greater Focus on Service Standards**

Service standards are how customers can expect what they should be receiving as part of their service, for example typical response times to a query, wait times in line, attitude of the service provider. When asked what CRH could do to improve their service delivery, survey participants suggested reducing wait times, adding more staff to reduce wait times and improving the attitude of staff. According to Dinsdale & Marson (1999, p. 22), they found that people “who wait for long periods of time or required many contacts to get service, tend to rate performance very low.”

Moreover, questions on service standards are easier for customers to understand and answer. BC Housing shifted their focus from measuring customer satisfaction to measuring service standards because customers were not always sure what customer satisfaction meant. Pawson and Sosenko (2011, p. 71) highlighted that customers rated satisfaction based on their expectations of service delivery and if they were already adapted to a certain level of satisfaction, that their expectations would increase. Thus, questions solely focused on customer satisfaction are less likely to elicit responses that could assist with making improvements to service delivery. However, questions that place more focus on service standards and include a range of expectations in responses would provide data that CRH could better work with. For example, to measure if customers are satisfied with response time from CRH staff, the organisation would need to provide a list of ideal response times (i.e., within 24 hours, within 2 days).

This was done with the pilot survey and the second survey and the results provide CRH with an understanding of the current status of services being received as well as information on the standards that customers expect. For example, questions on response times for inquiries made to CRH provided results on current response times as well as expectations from customers set out in their comments in the survey. Additionally, in the second survey, questions on the attitude of CRH staff and markers of good attitude provided CRH with more information on the expectations their customers had for interactions with CRH, their needs and the current state on the attitude of their staff.

Thus, the design of the survey should provide questions directed at measuring the current state and expectations of service standards. Drawing on the recommendations from the second survey, these questions should be designed as Likert scale questions with a consistent rating scale and a comment box only for those cases where people had a complaint or were not satisfied with the service.
received. Continuously including questions on timing in the survey to better understand if those service standards are met and communicating CRH service standards can also assist customers to better manage their expectations on service quality from CRH.

**Theme 3: Meeting the Needs of the Most Vulnerable Customers**

The pilot and second survey contained questions asking participants to identify areas where CRH could learn more to better serve its customers, aimed at better understanding how CRH could make services more accessible to its customers. Responses to this question included requests to increase accessibility of buildings, requests to increase security and safety of buildings, language services for customers, providing assisted living, providing resources for those with disabilities, increased knowledge of coops, designation of some buildings as smoke/scent free and providing programs for seniors to feel more wanted. The responses above reflects that most of the vulnerable CRH customers required more assistance either because they had a disability, were taking care of someone with a disability, were concerned for their safety, were seniors who needed to feel more connected to the community they lived in or needed language services (i.e., translation or services provided in another language). Additionally, feedback on improvements to be made on the survey also included adding questions to identify if CRH’s office is comfortable and accessible for those with disabilities.

Thus, CRH should consider the vulnerable position of its customers when designing, delivering and responding to the survey. Furthermore, reporting on changes CRH is making to meet the needs of its most vulnerable will build trust; demonstrate that CRH is acting on feedback from the survey; and better position CRH to meet the needs of all of their customers.

**9.3 Summary: Implications for Developing Options**

In light of the findings, the survey is still the best approach to measuring customer satisfaction for CRH. It is a format that customers are familiar with since CRH has conducted other surveys. The findings from this research reveal that the problem is not in how to measure customer satisfaction but in garnering higher response rates. Higher response rates would provide more data that CRH could work with to better meet the needs of their customers.

The themes that arose from the research identified possible barriers that can be overcome to increase response rates. Increasing the accessibility of the survey to CRH customer can make it easier for customers to know of the survey and to complete the survey. Placing more emphasis on service standards in the survey design can make it easier for customers to complete the survey, especially as it will help them better understand what CRH is aiming to learn. One of the biggest barriers that CRH may be facing in getting higher responses could be a lack of awareness on how vulnerable some of their customers feel. Responding to customer satisfaction surveys puts customers in a vulnerable position to raise awareness of some of the issues they are facing without any certainty as to whether raising this awareness will result in any change. Thus, by reporting back to customers on how CRH will move forward with the results from the survey could build trust in both CRH and the survey process. This could then result in higher engagement and response rates on CRH customer satisfaction surveys.
10. OPTIONS TO CONSIDER AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this project was to develop a customer satisfaction survey and a plan for regular implementation of the survey, data collection and analysis of the results. A customer satisfaction survey has been developed and pilot tests have been run through the course of this project. Survey Monkey was the mechanism used to develop and deliver the survey as well as data collection and analysis. At the time the survey was conducted, CRH had an account with Survey Monkey and was familiar with using it to conduct surveys. Currently, CRH has another tool that keeps the data in Canada. Since CRH has the tools to conduct the survey in house, this paper presumes that the survey would be done in house instead of contracting out. As well, CRH did not request looking into the option of contracting this out, but it is an option for them to consider in the future.

The key issue was not in identifying the tool to measure customer satisfaction but in identifying a strategy to generate responses from CRH customers. In looking across the lines of evidence, three themes emerged that provided insight into the challenges in garnering a higher response rate from CRH customers: the accessibility of the survey to CRH customers; placing greater focus on service standards; and meeting the needs of the most vulnerable customers. The focus of this section will be to look at options for a strategy to deliver the survey that meets those themes before making a recommendation to CRH.

10.1 Options to Consider

The options for the survey strategy will consider the themes that arose from the lines of evidence (accessibility, service standards and vulnerability) as well as deliver methods and data reporting structure.

The three options are:

4. **Single Prong Approach: Telephone Surveys Only** – Surveys would be delivered over the phone, involving the recruitment of part-time staff during summer to deliver the surveys. The results of the survey would be announced in the annual report.

5. **Double Prong Approach: Telephone and Online Surveys** – The survey would be delivered largely online with an option for participants to complete the survey over the phone. Translation services would be provided for those who wish to complete the survey over the phone. Key changes to programs that results from the analysis of survey response will be reported in the annual reports.

6. **Multi Prong Approach: Telephone, Online and Mail-Out Surveys** – The survey would be delivered by mail, phone and online in hopes of reaching as many customers of CRH as possible. Translation services would be provided for those who wish to complete the survey over the phone. Results of the survey and key changes to programs and services influenced by feedback from the survey will be reported annually. The next round of survey will include questions to get feedback on the ability of those key changes to meet the needs of CRH’s customers.

The criteria for evaluating the options stem from the themes that arose as well as the findings from the jurisdictional scan and surveys. The themes of survey accessibility; greater focus on service standards; and meeting the needs of the most vulnerable customers identified some of the criteria in evaluating the options. These themes highlight the importance of the survey strategy being
accessible (both in delivery and readability) to all CRH customers; greater focus on service standards in the survey design should assist in higher quality data and meeting the needs of the most vulnerable customers should be part of the strategy.

Responses from the second survey indicated that some customers did not trust that CRH was interested in their concerns; so the option should provide CRH an opportunity to build trust. Moreover, through the jurisdictional scan, social housing organisations considered the resources at their disposal when they delivered surveys. Therefore, the option should also be resource efficient. Thus the following criteria will be used to evaluate the options:

- Customer accessibility – All CRH customers should be able to access the survey and it should be at a grade 6 reading level.
- Data quality – The option provides higher data quality.
- Meets needs of vulnerable customers – This option involves the incorporation of questions aimed at understanding the needs of vulnerable customers in the survey and reporting on changes in service delivery aimed at meeting those needs.
- Builds trust – The option provides opportunity for CRH to build trust with customers increasing likelihood of survey participation.
- Resource efficient – Efficient use of time, cost and people to conduct the survey.

The next three sections will examine the options in further details.

**Option 1: Single Prong Approach – Telephone Surveys Only**

The Single Prong Approach will deliver surveys through the phone, include the recommendations for greater focus on service standards in the design and report the results of the survey to CRH customers. This approach would require more time and people to conduct the surveys over the phone, which would be resource heavy.

Delivering the surveys over the phone results in a survey completion rate of between 15 to 20 minutes. Considering that there are over 5,000 housing units to reach out to, the researcher estimates that about 8 students should be hired for the summer (for about 45 days) to assist with delivering the surveys over the phone and analysis of results. This will cost approximately $40,500.

It would be accessible to all CRH customers as they should all have access to a phoneline. The quality of the data might be impacted by social desirability bias as customers are aware that they are speaking to a CRH staff member conducting the survey. This approach would contain existing questions aimed at unearthing the needs of the most vulnerable customers. Sharing the results through the annual report will build some trust amongst customers during the first few survey cycles. This means that the survey will be conducted every year. As time passes, however, customers may expect more from CRH than reporting the results of the survey.

**Option 2: Double Prong Approach – Telephone and Online Surveys**

The Double Prong Approach will deliver surveys online with an option for customers to complete the survey over the phone. The option to complete the survey over the phone will also include access to the language line to assist those with language barriers. This approach will require
additional time and resources for the phone survey delivery and data collection, especially in providing resources for the language line.

Completing the survey online takes approximately 10 minutes versus the 15 to 20 minutes it takes to complete over the phone. As there is an online option, fewer hires would be needed to assist with delivery of the survey and so the researcher recommends hiring up to 3 students during the summer (for about 30 days) to be available for those who wish to complete the survey over the phone. These students can also assist in analysing results. The total cost should then be about $10,125.

This would make the survey more accessible to all CRH customers as it overcomes challenges for those with language barriers. The quality of the data could be higher as those customers with language barriers will be able to more fully participate in the survey. The concern for social desirability bias, however, is still present for those who complete the survey over the phone.

This approach will provide added transparency by sharing the impact of customer responses to the customer satisfaction survey on their programs and services. For added impact, CRH should identify key issues from the responses that can be addressed through changes to existing programs and services and communicate these changes to its customers through a report. For example, based on the pilot survey, CRH may choose to either address their standards of service, quality of customer service or the security of residences. CRH can then discuss the changes they wish to make at the executive level and share them in their report. Thus, the survey should be delivered once every two years and these results shared in every other annual report.

This approach will include questions aimed at unearthing the needs of the most vulnerable customers and reporting on the changes CRH will implement as a result of those responses will position CRH to better meet the needs of CRH.

Option 3: Multi Prong Approach – Telephone, Online and Mail-Out Surveys

This approach would deliver the survey through multiple methods; phone, online and mail. The phone option will include access to the language line for assistance with interpretation. This will ensure that all customers are aware of the survey and have access to completing the survey. This option will also reduce the demand for staff to assist with delivering the survey over the phone. However, staff will be needed to assist with inputting data from the mail out surveys.

Thus, an additional 5 students should be hired for the summer (for about 45 days) to assist with mailing out surveys, to assist those who wish to complete the surveys over the phone, to input data received from the mail out surveys and to assist with analysis of the results. This will result in a cost of $25,312.50 for the hiring of staff.

Inputting the data gathered from mail and phone surveys will require more time than if surveys were only completed online. It should also reduce the frequency of social desirability bias if more customers opt to complete the online or mail out survey. Additionally, as found in the jurisdictional scan, reminders should be sent to customers for a higher response rate. There will be more costs for the postage for mail out surveys and mail out reminders (about $10,404.35). The total cost is thus about $35,716.85.

More responses and greater focus on service standards in the survey design will increase the quality of the data gathered. This approach will also include questions to unearthe the needs of the most
vulnerable customers, report on the results and changes resulting from the responses. The next round of survey will aim at getting feedback on whether those changes met the needs of the most vulnerable customers. This will build more trust as customers will not only see that CRH is interested and is acting on meeting those needs, but is also wanting feedback to identify opportunities to better meet their needs. Due to the resources required for delivering the surveys, analysing results and time required to report on changes resulting from the survey feedback, the survey should be delivered once every three years.

10.2 Comparing Options and Recommended Approach

Each option meets the above evaluation criteria in varying degrees. Figure 25 below will compare the options against the criteria.

Figure 25: Evaluation of Options

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Single Prong Approach – Telephone Surveys Only</th>
<th>Double Prong Approach – Telephone and Online Surveys</th>
<th>Multi Prong Approach – Telephone, Online and Mail-Out Surveys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Customer Accessibility</td>
<td>Accessible to most customers, except for those with language barriers.</td>
<td>Accessible to all customers and provides them a choice for completing the survey.</td>
<td>Accessible to all customers and provides choice for completion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Quality</td>
<td>Low to moderate quality. Phone surveys could be affected by social desirability bias.</td>
<td>Moderate data quality. Phone surveys could be affected by social desirability bias.</td>
<td>Moderate to high data quality. More responses will lead to more data. Social desirability bias could be lessened if more customers completed survey online or by mail.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meets Needs of the Most Vulnerable Customers</td>
<td>Low: identifies needs of most vulnerable customers with survey design.</td>
<td>Moderate: Identifies needs with survey design and communicates service changes to meet needs identified.</td>
<td>High: Identifies needs with survey design, communicates service changes to meet needs identified and gets feedback on the changes made to identify opportunities for improvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Builds Trust</td>
<td>Low: reporting of results demonstrates interest for customer feedback.</td>
<td>Moderate to High: Reporting on results and changes stemming from responses demonstrate CRH interest to both know and meet customer needs.</td>
<td>High: Reporting on results, implementing changes to service delivery using survey results and requesting feedback on changes demonstrates interest in knowing and meeting needs. Increases trust and engagement from customers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource Efficient</td>
<td>High: Requires more time, staff and costs to deliver survey and collect data over the phone.</td>
<td>Moderate: Online survey could reduce time and staff needed to deliver survey and collect data over the phone.</td>
<td>High: Requires more time to deliver the survey, collect data and analyse the results as well as provide feedback during reports</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Option 2 – Double Prong Approach is recommended as it scores high for most of the criteria while also making the most efficient use of resources. Implementation of this approach will be discussed in the next section.

10.3 Implementation Strategy for Recommended Approach

This section discusses the implementation strategy for Option 2 – Double Prong Approach. The implementation strategy requires the buy in of decision makers of CRH as well as added budget and staffing to address the resource requirement.

The implementation strategy considered the planning, budget and leadership support required for implementing the approach. CRH starts their annual operation planning cycle in the fall and each department is responsible for planning their operations. Support from the leadership team would be required for approval and budgeting.

The delivery and data collection of the survey would need added resources. Hiring summer students can assist with managing costs. CRH should then consider hiring university students in the summer.

Interdepartmental support would be required for identifying and implementing changes to programs and services that stem from survey results. Therefore, CRH should prepare a presentation to report on the results and recommendations for changes to programs and services to other departments and the leadership team for support and approval.

As trust is key to continued customer engagement and higher response rates, CRH would need to report the results of the survey and implications for changes to programs and services to customers. This will add transparency to the process; customers will know what the surveys were for and how they impacted the services they receive. It will also build trust as customers see their voices being heard and acted upon.

Finally, the success of the customer satisfaction survey requires continuous evaluation and maintenance. This stage identifies ways in which the survey design, delivery or data collection could be improved in order to ensure high quality in data collected. Maintenance of the survey process can identify and address any minor problems, challenges or barriers that could impact the success of this program.

The implementation strategy outlined in Figure 26 is based on current understandings of CRH’s operation cycle in the calendar year. Further information on budget approvals and operational planning could alter the timeline of the planning stage. CRH might also consider additional mechanisms for reporting the results of the survey, such as through presentations in town hall meetings. Moreover, CRH conducts a strategy planning session once every five years, which could lead to changes in the implementation strategy of this survey in the future. Figure 26 on the next page will outline the implementation stages for the recommended approach.
### Figure 26: Implementation Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Stage 1 – Planning October to December 2019 | • Revise the survey to include recommended changes  
• Request budget for additional resources (i.e., hiring of summer students to assist with delivery of survey, data collection and results)  
• Prepare communications package for the notification of the survey in tenant newsletters and distribution of the survey to customers.  
• Develop training package to train summer students on delivery of survey, collecting data and analysing results  
• Engage leadership team and ensure support for recommended approach and implementation plan  
• Hire summer students                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Stage 2 – Distribution & Delivery (May to June 2020) | • Send out communications notifying customers of upcoming survey  
• Distribute surveys to customers over the phone and online  
• Allocate time for summer students to follow up with customers and assist with delivery of the survey (i.e., assist those customers who wish to complete the survey over the phone)                                                                 |
| Stage 3 – Data Collection & Analysis (July to August 2010) | • Aligned the data collected from online and phone survey results  
• Review data and codify themes  
• Analyse results  
• Brainstorm options to improve programs and services while also better meeting customer needs  
• Prepare report of findings and recommendations for changes to programs and services.                                                                                                                                 |
| Stage 4 – Department and Leadership Engagement (September 2020) | • Present report and findings to decision makers for approvals  
• Identify partners to implement approved changes  
• Connect with partners to develop plan to implement approved changes                                                                                                                                 |
| Stage 5 – Reporting | • Publish a report on the results, key findings and changes to programs and services.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Stage 6 – Evaluation & Maintenance | • Develop monitoring and evaluation tools  
• Develop tools to support maintenance of this program                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

The purpose of this section was to provide options to CRH to take the existing survey and consider different approaches to increasing response rates before recommending the best approach for implementation. Higher response rates indicate higher customer engagement and allow the organisation to meet the Future State feedback loop with customers as identified in the analytic framework (Figure 3). Three options were presented to meet this problem and the challenges that came out as themes from the research undertaken in this project. The final recommendation successfully meets these challenges and considers efficient use of resources, trust building and data quality. The implementation strategy outlines the stages and steps required to implement the recommended approach.
11. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this project is to help Capital Region Housing develop a customer satisfaction survey and a plan for regular implementation and data collection and analysis. The main research question for this project was, “How best should the CRH measure the experience of their customers with the organisation?” The preliminary literature review into customer satisfaction measurements and jurisdictional scan into survey practices by similar sized social housing organisations demonstrated that surveys would be the best tool to measure customer experience and satisfaction. This research also assisted in identifying the framework and questions for the survey.

As CRH was also already delivering other surveys (i.e., on well-being) to its customers through survey monkey, the same platform was used in this survey. A pilot survey was run to test the survey and a focus group was held to hear from customers their perceptions of the survey and identify areas of the survey that can be further improved. Since the focus group had a low turnout, a second survey was designed and delivered online to access a larger sample of customers.

Key findings from the surveys suggest that customers were largely satisfied with the quality of their service; that there were concerns on security of social buildings and wait times and that the attitude of staff directly impacted perceptions of the quality of the service received.

The problem was then redefined to looking at how to increase the response rate for the survey. The themes that emerged through this survey alluded to the challenges in increasing the survey response rates. The themes were accessibility of the survey to customers, greater focus on service standards in the survey and meeting the needs of the most vulnerable customers. The options for addressing this problem included different strategy for addressing those challenges as well as building trust, improving data quality and efficient use of resources. A Double Prong Approach best met those criteria and an implementation plan for the recommended approach was presented in this project. The next steps are for CRH to review the options and recommendation and present it to its decision makers for approval.

There are a few areas of research that could assist CRH in strengthening this survey program. A deeper analysis of the Dutch experience conducting customer satisfaction surveys for its social housing services could provide added learning for CRH. Additionally, looking into the possibility of a national benchmarking approach in Canada could assist CRH in working in collaboration with other social housing organizations as well as benchmarking themselves against similar sized organizations across the country. Finally, CRH can also look into the possibility of contracting the survey program out to a third party organisation and see if that changes the response rate as well as cost of the program.
REFERENCES


Appendices

Appendix 1 – Phone Script

Phone Script

*This script is intended as a guideline for reaching out to CRH customers and inviting them to participate in the research. Please ensure to have a notepad on hand for any notes and a copy of the consent form to assist in answering any question on consent.*

“Good (morning/afternoon/evening) __________(name of customer). My name is __________ (name of authorized CRH administrator) and I am contacting you on behalf of Capital Region Housing. (If necessary, provide a brief explanation of their role in CRH) How are you doing today? (engage in some small talk).

The reason for my call is to let you know about a research study on developing a customer satisfaction tool that Miss Vaishnavie Gnanasaravanapavan is conducting on behalf of Capital Region Housing. The researcher is not a staff member of CRH. She is doing the research on behalf of CRH. She is a graduate student in the Dispute Resolution program at the School of Public Administration at the University of Victoria. Her research will be overseen by an academic supervisor – Professor Evert Lindquist at the University of Victoria – and a representative of the OUR organization, which will be Esther de Vos, Director of Policy, Research and Strategic Initiatives at CRH. As well, the research project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Board of the University of Victoria.

Please know that my role is just to provide information about the study on behalf of the researcher.

The point of this research project is to help CRH create a customer satisfaction survey. The project will help CRH to improve the quality of our programs and services to customers.

As part of this research process, the researcher is requesting the help of customers of CRH, like you, to provide your thoughts on a pilot survey and attend a focus group.

We would like to make it clear that your decision to participate will not affect the services you receive from CRH. Please know that any personal information that the researcher receives through your participation in this project will be kept confidential and anonymous. The CRH will not be told who has agreed to participate. Also, any information you provide in the study will not affect the services you receive from CRH.

The survey will take about thirty minutes. It will take about two to three hours for the focus group discussion.

The survey does collect personal information about ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, income, age, status of residency and any challenges/barriers faced (i.e., due to disability). You would skip any survey questions that you do not wish to answer and you can leave the focus group without completing it. Please know that any personal information we receive through your participation in this project will be kept confidential and anonymous. “
Pause and ask if they have any questions or if there is any part they do not understand. Feel free to do this at any point in the conversation if you feel that the customer is getting lost.

“The FOCUS GROUP meeting will be held at a CRH office or partner office. LOCATION, date AND time WILL BE determined. The hope is to have an office at a building where free daycare services will be provided.

Written notes and audio recordings will be taken during the focus group sessions to add to the data from the surveys.

If you might be interested in participating or getting more information, the researcher will send you an email with details about the project and a consent form. This doesn’t mean that you have to join the study. She will also answer your questions.

Do you prefer to contact the researcher yourself or do I have your permission to share your email with her so she can contact you? Again, this doesn’t mean you are joining the study or have to join the study. As well, CRH will not know who has agreed to participate.”

The researcher’s email is gvaishnavie@gmail.com.

Wait for customer to respond. Refer to consent form and project proposal to answer any questions customer has.
Appendix 2 – Consent Form (Survey)

Customer Satisfaction Survey: Recommendations for the Capital Region Housing Corporation Edmonton

We invite you to participate in a study entitled Customer Satisfaction Survey: Recommendations for the Capital Region Housing Corporation Edmonton that I, Vaishnavie Gnanasaravanapavan, am conducting.

I am a graduate student of the School of Public Administration at the University of Victoria. You can e-mail me with any questions at gvaishnavie@gmail.com.

As a graduate student, I have to conduct research to complete my degree in Dispute Resolution. I am doing this under the supervision of Dr. Evert Lindquist. You may contact my supervisor at evert@uvic.ca. The Human Research Ethics Board at the University of Victoria has reviewed and approved the research design of this project.

This study is for Capital Region Housing Corporation Edmonton (CRH). I am working with Esther de Vos, Director of Policy, Research and Strategic Initiatives at CRH.

Purpose and Objectives

The point of this research project is to help CRH create a customer satisfaction survey.

Importance of this Research

CRH is being more customer focused in the programs and services and services it delivers. This research will help CRH learn from their customers on what works and what they want.

Participants Selection

We invite you to participate in this study because you are a customer of CRH. Please note that you do not have to take part in this study. Your decision to participate will not have any affect on the services you receive from CRH.

What is involved

If you do want to take part in this research, it will include filling out a pilot survey. It would take about thirty minutes to complete the survey. The survey does collect personal information about ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, income, age, status of residency and any challenges you have faced (for example, due to disability or a language difference). If you do agree to complete the survey, please feel free to skip any questions that you do not wish to answer. This research study may include data stored in the United States of America (U.S.). By that, I mean that if we use an online survey tool like surveymonkey, then the data may be stored in a U.S. based server. If so, there is a chance that information about you that is collected for this
research study may be accessed without your knowledge or consent by the U.S. Government in compliance with the U.S. Freedom Act.

Any information we do get from you from this study will not be used or have any affect on the services you receive from CRH.

At this time, we want to let you know about the second part of our research; the focus group process. If you take part, you will meet with 9 other customers of CRH who did the pilot survey. You will share your thoughts on the pilot survey with the researcher. The meeting would take between two to three hours. The meeting will be held at a CRC office or partner office that is to be decided. Date and time will be decided based on when participants and a meeting room are available.

Would you be interested in being part of the focus group:  □ Yes □ No    Initials:

In the focus group meetings, I will make written notes and audio recordings of the discussions. I will write out the audio recordings to add to the data. The information will be kept confidential. No identifying information (such as names or addresses) will be included with the data collected.

Inconvenience

Taking part in this study may cause some trouble to you. You may have to find time in your day to fill out the survey. You may have to find someone to take care of your family to fill out the survey in peace.

If you wish to be part of the focus group, you may have to take a taxi or a bus to the meeting place. We would also ask you to think about things like taking the time to attend the meetings, finding people to care for any family at home and changing appointments (if needed). Please think about this before agreeing to participate. We are thankful for your time.

Risks

You may have some worries about filling out the surveys or taking part in the focus groups. You may not feel safe to answer questions about your dealings with CRH. If you do not feel safe or comfortable in the focus groups or filling out the survey, please feel free to stop the survey or leave the focus group at any time.

Only the researcher and her academic supervisor will see any information we get from the survey and focus groups. CRH and the public will only get the results of this study. The researcher will not include any identifying information (like names or addresses) when giving the results of this study to CRH or anyone else.

In the focus groups, we will ask you and others present to share their thoughts on the survey process as part of a group discussion. This could lead to people sharing private/personal information about themselves. To protect everyone’s privacy, we ask you to not share any information you get from the focus group with anyone outside of the group during or after the meeting. Please initial here to confirm that you agree: ____________________.

Benefits

Your help with this research will give CRH information on how to measure the quality of their customer service. This will help CRH better serve their customers. It will add to the current knowledge on customer satisfaction measurement tools for the social/public housing organisations.
Compensation

We will enter survey participants into a draw to win a $25 gift card to Superstore.

Focus group members will get a $25 gift card to Superstore at the end of the meeting. IF you agree to participate in this study, this gift card to you must not be forced. It is unethical to provide undue compensation or inducements to research participants. If you would not participate if the gift card was not offered, then you should not agree to take part in this study.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may leave at any time without any costs. If you do leave the study, we will not use the information you gave. You will still receive the gift certificate at the end of the process.

Anonymity

In terms of protecting your privacy, the researcher will not connect any identifying information (names or addresses) from the data gathered. She will not be using it in the analysis or writing of results. The results of this research will be written as themes or as the total experience of the groups of customers who took part. It will not be connected to any one person.

Confidentiality

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by storing the data in password protected files in the researcher’s laptop.

Dissemination of Results

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others by providing a copy of the report to CRH and as a capstone project for defense to the School of Public Administration at the University of Victoria. Additionally, the study may also be discussed in CRH’s customer and/or stakeholder newsletter. Thus, please consider how comfortable you are with the information being shared in this manner before agreeing to participate in this study.

Disposal of Data

Data collected will be removed of any identifiers (names, addresses, etc.,) and will be provided to CRH on a USB disk for storage. Primary research will request that the information be stored in a safe space accessible to those who require the research data for relevant projects within the organisation.

Contacts

Please contact the researcher, Vaishnavie Gnanasaravanapavan by e-mail at gvaish@uvic.ca with any concerns or questions about this study.
In addition, you may check the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study, that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers, and that you consent (agree) to participate in this research project.

_____________________________  ___________________________  ____________
Name of Participant                      Signature                      Date

Please scan and send back a signed copy of this consent form to the researcher. Please keep a copy of this form for your records.

Appendix 3 – Consent Form (Focus Group)

Customer Satisfaction Survey: Recommendations for the Capital Region Housing Corporation Edmonton
(Applicable to all participant groups)

You are invited to participate in a study entitled Customer Satisfaction Survey: Recommendations for Capital Region Housing that I, Vaishnavie Gnanasaravananapavan, am conducting.

I am a graduate student of the School of Public Administration at the University of Victoria. You can e-mail me with any questions at gvaishnavie@gmail.com.
As a graduate student, I have to conduct research to complete my degree in Dispute Resolution. I am doing this under the supervision of Dr. Evert Lindquist. You may contact my supervisor at evert@uvic.ca. The Human Research Ethics Board at the University of Victoria has reviewed and approved the research design of this project.

This study is for Capital Region Housing (CRH). I am working with Esther de Vos, Director of Policy, Research and Strategic Initiatives at CRH.

**Purpose and Objectives**

The point of this research project is to help CRH create a customer satisfaction survey.

**Importance of this Research**

CRH is becoming more customer focused in the programs and services it delivers. This research will help CRH learn from their customers on what works and what they want.

**Participants Selection**

We invite you to participate in this study because you are a customer of CRH. Please note that you do not have to take part in this study. Your decision to participate will not have any affect on the services you receive from CRH.

**What is involved**

As you have already completed the survey, we would like to hear what you thought of it. WE are asking you to be part of the focus group. If you take part, you will meet with up to 9 other customers of CRH who did the pilot survey. You will share your thoughts on the pilot survey with the researcher. The meeting would take between two to three hours. The meeting would be held at 3756 78 St NW on Tuesday, September 28, 2018 at 6pm.

In the focus group meetings, I will make written notes and audio recordings of the discussions. I will write out the audio recordings to add to the data. The information will be kept confidential. No identifying information (such as names or addresses) will be included with the data collected.

**Inconvenience**

Taking part in this study may cause some trouble to you. You may have to take a taxi or a bus to the meeting place. We would also ask you to think about things like taking the time to attend the meetings, finding people to care for any family at home and changing appointments (if needed). Please think about this before agreeing to participate. We are thankful for your time.

**Risks**

You may have some worries about filling out the survey or taking part in the focus group. You may not feel safe to answer questions about your dealings with the CRH. If you do not feel safe or comfortable in the focus groups or filing out the survey, please feel free to stop at any time.

Only the researcher and her academic supervisor will see any information we get from the survey and focus groups. CRH and the public will only get the results of this study. The researcher will not include any identifying information (like names or addresses) when giving the results of this study to CRH or anyone else.
In the focus groups, we will ask you and others present to share their thoughts on the survey process as part of a group discussion. This could lead to people sharing private/personal information about themselves. To protect everyone’s privacy, we ask you not to share any information you get from the focus group with anyone outside of the group during or after the meeting. **Please initial here to confirm that you agree:**

You may want to know how the focus group meetings will run. Before starting, the researcher will work with the group to set rules so that talks are respectful and meet the needs of the group. There will be breaks (at least two) during the focus group meeting. If you need to take a break, please feel free to leave the room. If you do take a break or seem upset, the researcher will meet with you to try to help. This includes listening to you, answering any questions you may have and helping you find services that can help.

**Benefits**

Your help with this research will give CRH information on how to measure the quality of their customer service. This will help CRH better serve their customers. It will add to current knowledge on customer satisfaction measurement tools for social/public housing organisations.

**Compensation**

Focus group members will get a $25 gift card to Superstore at the end of the meeting. If you agree to participate in this study, this gift card to you must not be forced. It is unethical to provide undue compensation or inducements to research participants. If you would not participate if the gift card was not offered, then you should not agree to take part in this study.

**Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may leave at any time without any costs. If you do leave the study, we will not use the information you gave. You will still receive the gift certificate at the end of the process.

**Anonymity**

In terms of protecting your anonymity, the researcher will not connect any identifying information (names or addresses) from the data gathered. She will not be using it in the analysis or writing of results. The results of this research will be written as themes or as the total experience of the groups of customers who took part. It will not be connected to any one person.

**Confidentiality**

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by storing the data in password protected files in the researcher’s laptop.

**Dissemination of Results**

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others by providing a copy of the report to CRH and as a capstone project for defense to the School of Public Administration at the University of Victoria. Additionally, the study may also be discussed in CRH’s customer and/or stakeholder newsletter. Thus, please consider how comfortable you are with the information being shared in this manner before agreeing to participate in this study.
Disposal of Data

Data collected will be removed of any identifiers (names, addresses, etc.,) and will be provided to CRH on a USB disk for storage. Primary research will request that the information be stored in a safe space accessible to those who require the research data for relevant projects within the organisation.

Contacts

Please contact the researcher, Vaishnavie Gnanasaravanapavan by e-mail at gvaish@uvic.ca with any concerns or questions about this study.

In addition, you may check the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study, that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers, and that you consent (agree) to participate in this research project.

Name of Participant                Signature                Date

Please scan and send back a signed copy of this consent form to the researcher. Please keep a copy of this form for your records.
Appendix 4 – E-mail Invitation (Second Survey)

Customer Satisfaction Survey: Recommendations for the Capital Region Housing Edmonton

Capital Region Housing (CRH) wants to hear from all of our customers. As part of this, CRH is delivering a pilot customer satisfaction survey to test out the survey and see how it can be improved. You are being contacted because you are currently receiving a subsidy from CRH or live in CRH housing.

We invite you to participate in a research study entitled Customer Satisfaction Survey: Recommendations for the Capital Region Housing led by myself, Vaishnavie Gnanasaravanapavan.

I am a graduate student in the Dispute Resolution program at the School of Public Administration at the University of Victoria. I am working with Esther de Vos, Director of Policy, Research and Strategic Initiatives at CRH. I am doing this study for Capital Region Housing (CRH) to help them create a customer satisfaction survey.

We would like to test it and will need the help of willing customers of CRH to do so. You can help us by filling out the survey. The survey will take about 30 minutes of your time and you may need to find a quiet place to complete it.

The researcher will keep any information you give us through this survey private and confidential. In terms of protecting your privacy, she will not connect any identifying information (names or addresses) from the information gathered. She will not be using it in the analysis or writing of results. The results of this research will be written as themes or as the total experience of the groups of customers who took part. It will not be connected to any one person.

If you do agree to complete the survey, please feel free to skip any questions that you do not wish to answer. If you agree to fill out the survey, you can choose to be entered into a draw to win a $25 gift card to Superstore. No contact information will be shared with CRH.

Please note that the information collected from the survey may be stored online in a U.S. based server. By that, I mean that if we use an online survey tool, such as surveymonkey, then the data may be stored in a U.S. based server. This could mean that information about you that we get for this research study may be accessed without your knowledge or consent by the U.S. government in compliance with the U.S. Freedom Act.

You do not have to fill out this survey. Your decision to take part in this will not affect your files or any services you receive from CRH. Also, please note that you can decide to stop taking part in the at any time. If you choose to leave, we will not keep any information we get from you through this study and will destroy it to protect your privacy.

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by storing the data in password protected files in the researcher’s laptop.

Please contact the researcher, Vaishnavie Gnanasaravanapavan by e-mail at gvaish@uvic.ca with any questions.
In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

Sincerely,

Vaishnavie Gnanasaravanapavan.
Appendix 5 – Pilot Survey – First edition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRH Customer Satisfaction Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overview</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research. Please note that this survey will take about thirty minutes to complete. The survey does collect personal information about ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, income, age, status of residency and any challenges you have faced (for example, due to disability or a language difference). Please feel free to skip any questions that you do not wish to answer.

Any information we do get from you from this study will not be used or have any affect on the services you receive from CRH.

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may leave at any time without any costs. If you do leave the study, we will not use the information you gave. You will still be eligible for the draw to win a $25 gift card to Superstore at the end of the process.

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by storing the data in password protected files in the researcher’s laptop.
2. How did you make your inquiry? Please answer the questions for only one method: phone, e-mail OR in person.

**Phone**

*If by phone, was your call handled right away?*

*If not, were you put on hold and for how long?*

*If you were told someone would return your call, how soon was it returned?*

**Email**

*If by e-mail, did you get a reply e-mail?*

*How quickly?*

**In person**

*If in person, did you get to meet a staff member right away?*

*If not, how long did it take to meet someone?*
CRH Customer Satisfaction Survey

Multiple Inquiries Needed

4. If you had to make more than one inquiry, how many inquiries did you make?
   - 2
   - 3
   - 4
   - 5 or more

5. How did you make these inquiries?
   - Phone
   - E-mail
   - In-person
   - Phone and E-mail
   - Phone and In-person
   - E-mail and In-person
   - All of the above

6. How soon did you receive a response?
   - Right away
   - Within an hour
   - Within 24 hours
   - Within 48 hours
   - Within the week
   - More than a week

If you did not receive an answer right away, what caused the delay?

[Blank box for input]
7. Did you receive clear answers to your questions?
   - No answers
   - Not clear
   - Somewhat clear
   - Clear
   - Very Clear

8. Were all of your concerns addressed?
   - None of my concerns were addressed
   - Few of my concerns were addressed
   - Half of my concerns were addressed
   - Most concerns were addressed
   - All concerns were addressed

9. Did you think the outcome was fair?
   

10. Did you have to speak to a manager to get more information?
    - Yes
    - No
    If yes, was the manager able to better assist you? How so?
    

11. How knowledgeable did the staff member you dealt with seem?
    - Not at all knowledgeable
    - Barely knowledgeable
    - Somewhat knowledgeable
    - Knowledgeable
    - Extremely knowledgeable

12. Are you happy with the result of your service?
    If yes, then what did you like?
    If no, then what can be improved?

13. During your conversation with the clerk, did you learn any information that you found surprising?
### General Service Questions

14. How easy do you find it to let CRH know of any changes in your housing status or needs?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not easy</th>
<th>Little Easy</th>
<th>Somewhat Easy</th>
<th>Easy</th>
<th>Very Easy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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Please explain

15. Capital Region Housing (CRH) also wants to raise awareness of housing needs and advocate for better, more inclusive communities. Can you think of any areas that Capital Region Housing could know more about in order to help you, or other customers, use our services (for example, language services, income assistance, assisted living, inclusion etc.)

Please explain

16. If you are receiving rent subsidies directly from CRH, please let us know if you have had any problems with or questions about the process.

Please explain

17. Overall, how satisfied are you with the customer service you receive from CRH?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Somewhat Satisfied</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
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</table>

Do you have any suggestions for how CRH can improve their service delivery?

Please explain
Thank you for taking the time to fill out this survey.
Appendix 6 – Focus Group Questions

CAPITAL REGION HOUSING – CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY
FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Opening:

Welcome the participants and introduce yourself, your position and the goal of this session. Thank them for taking their time out of their busy lives to assist you and CRH in developing the customer satisfaction survey. Advise that this focus group is to follow up on the pilot survey that they completed and to hear their thoughts on the survey itself. Kindly ask them to keep any information revealed about the other participants confidential. Advise that any information gathered about them will not affect their current status with CRH and that no identifying information will be collected nor will it be included in the discussion of the findings. Clarify the time and information expected from them for this meeting. Explain that kind of incentive and compensation will be provided and that they can choose to withdraw at any time, however, the incentive will only be provided at the end of the session. Also explain that should they choose to withdraw, any data collected from them will not be used in the research. Ask them if they have any questions before commencing with the group discussion.

Questions:

1. What were your initial thoughts of the survey process?

2. What did you think of the medium chosen to deliver the survey?
   a. Do you think the medium is easily accessible?
   b. During your day to day lives, should you receive a request to complete the survey after receiving a service from CRH, how likely are you to complete it?
   c. What type of medium would prevent you from completing the survey?

3. What did you think of the questions asked in the survey?
   a. Did the questions provide you an opportunity to give as much feedback as possible about the survey you received?
   b. What additional questions (if any) would you like to see on the survey?

4. How clear were the questions?

5. Is there anything about this survey process that would prevent you from completing the survey (type of questions, time delivered…)?

6. What would you suggest to improve the survey process (delivery, content, etc)?

7. Do you have any questions/concerns about the surveys?

8. What would you like to know about the results of the surveys?

9. What would you suggest as appropriate timelines for delivering the survey?
Appendix 7 – Second Survey

1. Introduction

Capital Region Housing (CRH) wants to hear from all of our customers. As part of this, CRH is delivering a pilot customer satisfaction survey to test out the survey and see how it can be improved.

To test out the survey, we invite you to participate in this study entitled Customer Satisfaction Survey: Recommendations for Capital Region Housing that I, Vaishnavie Gnanasaravanapavan, am conducting. I am working with Esther de Vos, Director of Policy, Research and Strategic Initiatives at CRH in planning this survey.

To tell you a little about myself, I am a graduate student of the School of Public Administration at the University of Victoria. You can e-mail me with any questions at gvaish@uvic.ca. As a graduate student, I have to conduct research to complete my degree in Dispute Resolution. I am doing this under the supervision of Dr, Evert Lindquist, You may contact him at evert@uvic.ca.

The Human Research Ethics Board at the University of Victoria has gone over and approved the research design of this project.

The survey will take about 30 minutes of your time. It will ask questions about the quality of customer service you get from CRH,
2. Information about the Study

What is involved
Taking part in this research includes filling out a pilot survey including providing suggestions on how we can improve the survey. It would take about thirty minutes to complete this survey. Since we are using the online survey tool survey monkey, your answers may be stored in a U.S. based server. If so, there is a chance that the answers you provide could be available without your knowledge or consent to the U.S. government due to the U.S. Freedom Act. However, we are not asking any questions about your identity, so your answers cannot be linked to you. If you do agree to complete the survey, please feel free to skip any questions that you do not wish to answer.

Also, any information we do get from you from this study will not be linked to identifiers and be used in a confidential way that preserves your anonymity from the CRH.

Inconvenience
Taking part in this study may cause some trouble to you. You may have to find time in your day to fill out the survey.

Risks
You may have some worries about filling out the survey. You may not feel safe to answer questions about your dealings with CRH. If you do not feel safe or comfortable filling out the survey, please feel free to stop at any time.

Only the researcher and her academic supervisor will see any information we get from the survey, CRH and the public will only get the results of this study. The researcher will not include any identifying information (like names or addresses) when giving the results of this study to CRH or anyone else.

Benefits
Your help with this research will give CRH information on how to measure the quality of their customer service. This will help CRH better serve their customers. It will add to the current knowledge of customer satisfaction measurement tools for social/public housing organisations.

Compensation
There will be a draw to win a $25 gift card to Superstore. Please note that participation in this draw is voluntary and if you wish to enter the draw, we will ask for some contact information to reach you if you win. The contact information you provide, however, will not be shared with Capital Region Housing. It will only be used for the draw and will not be connected to the survey.

Voluntary Participation
Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may leave at any time without any costs. If you do leave the study, we will not use the information you gave. If you win the draw, you will still receive the gift certificate at the end of the process.
Anonymity
In terms of protecting your privacy, the researcher will not connect any identifying information (names or addresses) from the information gathered. She will not be using it in the analysis or writing of results. The results of this research will be written as themes or as the total experience of the groups of customers who took part. It will not be connected to any one person.

Confidentiality
Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by storing the data in password protected files in the researcher’s laptop.

Dissemination of Results
We expect that the results of this study will be shared with others by providing a copy of the report to CRH and as a capstone project for defense to the School of Public Administration at the University of Victoria. The study may also be discussed in CRH's customer and/or stakeholder newsletter. However, no personal information about participants will be shared in the results of this study. If you are comfortable with how the results will be shared, please continue to the next page. You may withdraw from the survey at any point.
3. Contact Information and Consent

Disposal of Data
Data collected will be removed of any identifiers (names, addresses, etc.,) and will be provided to CRH on a USB disk for storage. The researcher will request that the information in the USB be stored in a safe space accessible to those who require the research data for relevant projects within the organisation.

Contacts
Please contact the researcher, Vaishnavie Gnanasaravanapavan, by e-mail at gvaish@uvic.ca with any concerns or questions about this study.

You may also check the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

By completing and submitting the questionnaire, YOUR FREE AND INFORMED CONSENT IS IMPLIED and indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers,
4. General Information

1. Which type of services/programs are you receiving from Capital Regional Housing?
   - Community Housing
   - Rent Subsidies
   - Near Market Housing

2. In the past six months, have you contacted Capital Region Housing (CRH) for any of the following reasons? Check all that apply
   - check on the status of your application
   - questions regarding tenant lease
   - check on status of housing
   - about the move-in process
   - regarding an income review
   - general question
   - request a rent adjustment
   - not contacted in the past six months
   - questions about a rent subsidy agreement
   - Other reason
     
[80]
5. Contact Frequency

3. Did you have to contact CRH more than once to get an answer?
   - Yes
   - No
6. Answered within one contact

4. If you had to contact CRH only once, then how did you make your contact with CRH?
   - Phone (If by phone, please answer Question 4)
   - E-mail (If by e-mail, please skip to Question 5)
   - In-person (If in person, please skip to Question 6)
   - Mail (If by mail, please skip to Question 7)

5. If by phone, please answer the following:
   - Was your phone answered right away?
   - If not, were you put on hold and for how long?
   - If you were told someone would return your call, how soon was it returned?

6. If by e-mail, please answer the following...
   - Did you get a reply e-mail?
   - How quickly?

7. If in person, please answer the following ...
   - Did you get to meet a staff member right away?
   - If not, how long did it take to meet someone?

8. If by mail, please answer the following...
   - Did you hear back from CRH?
   - How quickly did you receive a response to your letter?
   - How did CRH reply back: Phone, e-mail or mail?
9. If you had to make more than one inquiry, how many inquiries did you make?
   □ 2
   □ 3
   □ 4
   □ 5 or more

10. How did you make these inquiries? Please select all that apply,
    □ Phone
    □ Mail
    □ E-mail
    □ In Person
    □ Comments

11. How soon did you receive a response?
    □ Right away
    □ Within an hour
    □ Within 24 hours
    □ Within 48 hours
    □ Within the week
    □ More than a week

If you did not receive an answer right away, what caused the delay?

[83]
8. Inquiry Experience

This page is to get a better understanding of the quality of service you received from CRH with regards to your latest inquiry, Please answer all questions that apply.

12. Did you receive clear answers to your questions?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No Answers</th>
<th>Not Clear</th>
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<th>Mostly Clear</th>
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<td>★</td>
<td>★</td>
<td>★</td>
<td>★</td>
<td>★</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13. Were all of your concerns addressed?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>None of my concerns were addressed,</th>
<th>Few of my concerns were addressed,</th>
<th>Half of my concerns were addressed,</th>
<th>Most of my concerns were addressed,</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>★</td>
<td>★</td>
<td>★</td>
<td>★</td>
<td>★</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14. Did you think the outcome of your inquiry was fair? Please explain.

[Blank space for answer]

15. Did you have to speak to a manager to get more information?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

If yes, was the manager able to better assist you? How so?

[Blank space for answer]

16. How knowledgeable did the staff member you dealt with seem?

<table>
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<tr>
<td>★</td>
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<td>★</td>
<td>★</td>
<td>★</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

17. Are you happy with the result of your service?

If yes, then what did you like?

[Blank space for answer]

If not, then what could be improved?

[Blank space for answer]

18. During your conversation with the clerk, did you learn any information that you found surprising?

[Blank space for answer]
9. General Service Questions

This page is your overall experience with CRH. Please answer all that apply.

19. How easy do you find it to let CRH know of any changes in your housing status or needs?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not Easy</th>
<th>Little Easy</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

Please explain.


20. How comfortable do you feel talking to CRH about your safety and security needs?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>A Little Comfortable</th>
<th>Somewhat Comfortable</th>
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Please explain.


21. Capital Region Housing (CRH) also wants to raise awareness of housing needs and advocate for better, more inclusive communities. Can you think of any areas that Capital Region Housing could know more about in order to help you, or other customers, use our services (for example, language services, income assistance, assisted living, inclusion etc.)


[85]
22. CRH wants to know how you feel about the attitude you receive from the staff at CRH. Please answer the following questions.

What would you define as a good attitude when providing customer service?

Is there a specific tone of voice, body language or any other factor that you would add to your definition above of a good attitude?

Do you feel that you receive a good attitude from CRH staff assisting you? Why or why not?

Is there anything CRH staff can do to improve their attitude when providing customer service?

23. Are you receiving rent subsidies directly from CRH (in the form of cheques or deposits to your bank account)? If so, please let us know if you have had any problems with this process.

24. Overall, how satisfied are you with the customer service you receive from CRH?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very dissatisfied</th>
<th>Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Somewhat satisfied</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Very Satisfied</th>
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<tr>
<td>★</td>
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<td>★</td>
<td>★</td>
<td>★</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Do you have any suggestions for how CRH can improve their service delivery?
10. Thank You

Thank you for taking the time to participate by completing this customer satisfaction survey. We appreciate the information you shared, which will be used to begin understanding how customers like you feel about the services you receive from CRH as well as help revise the survey to better capture the experience of a CRH customer.

25. Please let us know if you have any thoughts about this survey? As well, do you have any ideas on how we can improve this survey?

26. Finally, in order to participate in the draw for $25 gift card, we would need your contact information. If you wish to participate in the draw, please check yes and e-mail your contact information to gvaish@uvic.ca. Please note that participation in this draw is voluntary and your contact information will not be shared with Capital Region Housing

☐ Yes
☐ No