

U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service

Customer Satisfaction Survey - Participants

Final Report
October 2008



This page intentionally left blank.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
Overall Findings and Recommendations	5
Detailed Report	7
Introduction & Methodology	9
Part Time Farmers	11
Socially Disadvantaged and Limited Resource Farmers	21
Special Crop Farmers	31
Beginning Farmers	41
Historically Underserved Farmers	51
Appendices	
Appendix A: Survey Questionnaire	61
Appendix B: Results Tables	71
Appendix C: Verbatim Comments	87

This page intentionally left blank.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This page intentionally left blank.

Overall Findings and Recommendations

Customers of NRCS as measured with five customer groups indicated a high level of satisfaction overall (80) and among individual groups. Part Time Farmers were the most satisfied with a satisfaction index of 83, while Specialty Crop Farmers scored satisfaction the lowest of these groups, but still had a score of 78. These scores are well above the current Federal Government average of 68.

Older respondents tended to rate satisfaction slightly higher than younger respondents did with those 65 and over having a customer satisfaction index of 83 compared to 76 for those under 45. Part time farmers were slightly more satisfied than full time (satisfaction index of 82 compared to 78).

In rating the areas of performance and customer touch points, customers indicated a high level of performance across most areas. Customers had an easy time scheduling visits to the field office. They found staff to be available and professional. The field visits were also easy to schedule. Staff were knowledgeable, thorough in their inventory of the customers' needs and opportunities and followed up in a timely manner. The solutions that NRCS proposed were found to be practical.

Communications and outreach from NRCS was found to be timely and addressing conservation needs of customers, however there may be an opportunity to provide information that is easier to understand. The most popular method of receiving information was direct mail. For most segments there was a 2 to 1 preference for direct mail compared to e-mail. For most groups financial assistance/information was most sought. However, among Historically Underserved Farmers technical assistance/information edged out financial/information as the most preferred.

The application process was viewed positively as well. Submitting and application was found to be easy, the response from NRCS was rated as mostly being quick. Program eligibility information was clear for the most part.

Recommendations are provided in more detail by segment within each chapter of the detailed report. While performance was rated relatively consistent across all segments, for certain segments there were different drivers of satisfaction.

Recommendations for Part Time Farmer customers were to build upon the strengths of field visits and communication/outreach. A particular challenge may be improving upon field visits, which were a high-performing area, but also a high-impact area where even a small improvement could drive satisfaction.

For Socially Disadvantaged and Limited Resource Farmers, field visits and the application process, submission and evaluation were the biggest drivers of satisfaction. Given the high performance in field visits, the application process may be a more likely opportunity to improve.

Specialty Crop Farmers rated the application process lowest and it had a sizable impact on satisfaction. To improve satisfaction among this group, target the application process as a first priority. However, communications and outreach is also a high impact area and relative to other drivers was lower scoring. This same pattern was true for Beginning Farmers.

For Historically Underserved Farmers, the application process, submission and evaluation was not only the lowest rated, but also the highest impact area. To improve customer satisfaction among this group, target the application process for improvement.

In addition to the quantitative findings provided in this report, verbatim commentary from the survey is provided for review to gain additional insight into the customers' needs.

This page intentionally left blank.

DETAILED REPORT

This page intentionally left blank.

Introduction & Methodology

The American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) is the national indicator of customer evaluations of the quality of goods and services available to U.S. residents. It is the only uniform, cross-industry/government measure of customer satisfaction. Since 1994, the ACSI has measured satisfaction, its causes, and its effects, for seven economic sectors, 41 industries, more than 200 private-sector companies, two types of local government services, the U.S. Postal Service, and the Internal Revenue Service. ACSI has measured more than 100 programs of federal government agencies since 1999. This allows benchmarking between the public and private sectors and provides information unique to each agency on how its activities that interface with the public affect the satisfaction of customers. The effects of satisfaction are estimated, in turn, on specific objectives (such as public trust).

ACSI is produced by the University of Michigan in partnership with CFI Group, and the American Society for Quality. This report was produced by CFI Group in collaboration with the University of Michigan. If you have any questions regarding this report, please contact CFI Group at 734-930-9090.

Segment Choice

This report is about the customers of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). All respondents have received assistance from NRCS in the past two years. There are five customer segments that were measured. These segments include: Part-Time Farmers, Specialty Crop Farmers, Socially Disadvantaged and Limited Resource Farmers, Beginning Farmers, and Historically Underserved Farmers.

Customer Sample and Data Collection

The USDA NRCS provided CFI Group with a sample of names and phone numbers of customers who received assistance during the past two years. A total 12,104 unique phone numbers were provided. Data were collected from July 8th through July 24th 2008. A total of 1239 responses were collected – a target of approximately 250 responses was set for each group. The cooperation rate of the study was 81.6%; this measures the cooperation of those eligible respondents who were successfully reached. The participation rate, which takes into account potential respondents who were not successfully reached, was 17.3%. The following page contains a table that shows a summary of call dispositions and a calculation of the response rate.

Questionnaire and Reporting

The report provides findings for each segment with a chapter dedicated to the findings, model and recommendations for each for each of the five customer segments.

The questionnaire used is shown in Appendix A. It was designed to be agency-specific in terms of activities, outcomes, and introductions to the questionnaire and specific question areas. However, it follows a format common to all the federal agency questionnaires that allow cause-and-effect modeling using the ACSI model. CFI Group collaborated with NRCS to develop the questionnaire for the survey. Most of the questions in the survey asked the respondent to rate items on a 1 to 10 scale, where “1” is “poor” and “10” is “excellent.” Scores are converted to a 0 to 100 scale for reporting purposes. Appendix B contains score tables at an aggregate level and segmented into groups. Appendix C contains verbatim comments to the responses for open-ended questions for the following questions.

Q14. How did you hear about the USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service assistance and programs?

Q15. How do you prefer to receive information?

Q16. Where do farmers in your community go to receive information on agriculture?

Q17. What assistance/information is most helpful to you?

Q18. What are some of the reasons why farmers in your community have chosen not to work with NRCS?

Q22. What thing(s) can NRCS do to let more producers know about the programs and assistance it provides?

Q27. What suggestions do you have for improving the application process?

Q31. If NRCS did not exist, where would you go to get this type of assistance?

Q35. How could NRCS provide assistance, information and/or services to better meet your needs?

Q36. How do you expect the new Farm Bill to impact you and your farming operations?

Call Dispositions and Response Rate Calculation

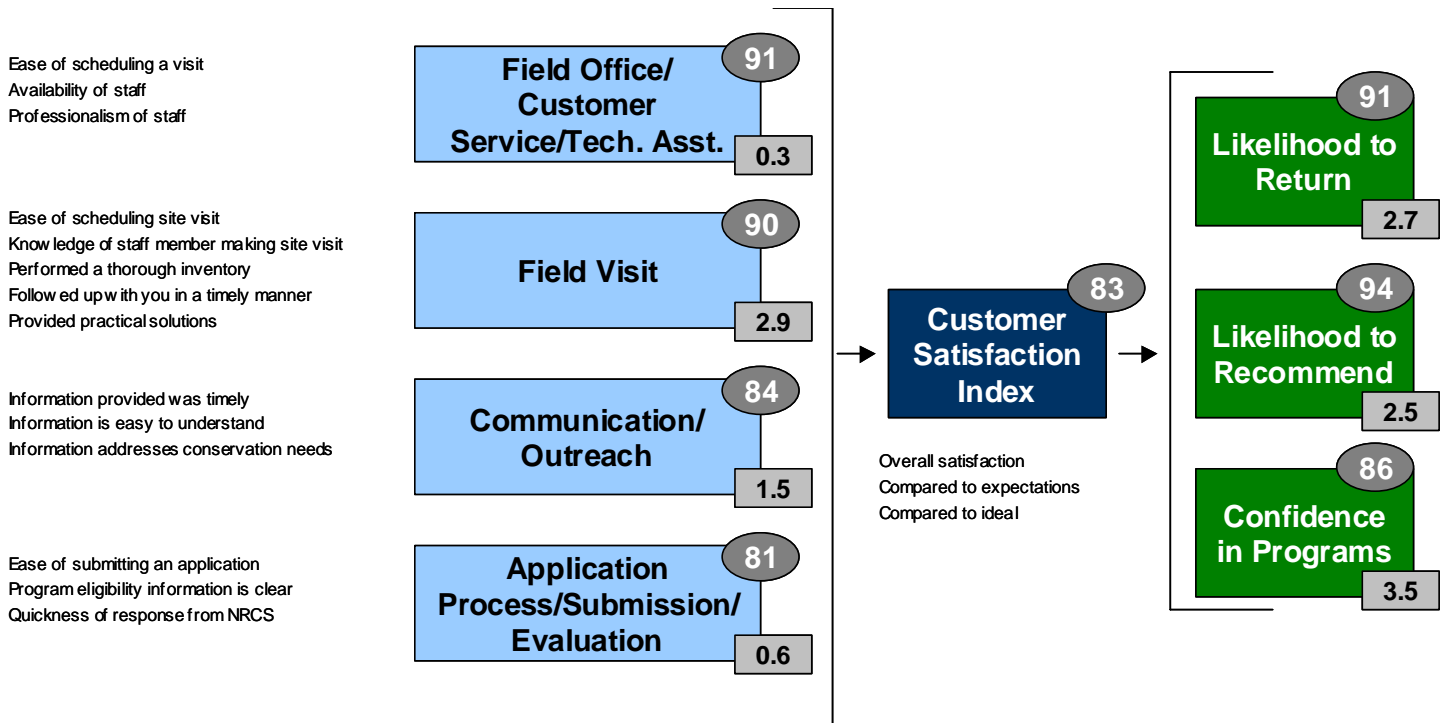
ACSI Code	AAPOR Code	Definition	n
U		UNIVERSE OF SAMPLED TELEPHONE NUMBERS	12104
		1 Interviews	
I	1.1	Total completed interviews	1239
P	1.2	Partial interviews	35
I+P		Total interviews	1274
		2 Eligible cases that are not interviewed (Non-respondents)	
	2.1	Break-offs	0
	2.11	Refusal, qualified cases	245
RQ		Total qualified cases refusals	245
		3 Cases of unknown eligibility (Unknown eligibility/No contact—Non-interview)	
	3.9	Cases of unknown eligibility (Unknown eligibility/No contact—Non-interview)	8791
	3.9	Foreign language/hard of hearing	113
UE		Total unknown eligibility	8904
		Cases that are not eligible (Non-eligible Respondents)	
	4.32	Disconnect/out of service	470
	4.2	Computer/FAX	132
		Wrong number	0
		Filter	825
		Other Non-eligible respondent	112
NER		Total Non-eligible Respondents	1539
		Quota Filled so respondent not eligible for interview	
	4.8	Case of quota-filled subgroup	0
	4.8	Scheduled for callback, but subgroup quota filled or interview period ended	142
QF		Total Quota Filled Respondents	142
U		Universe of Sampled Numbers	12104
NER		Less Non-eligible Respondents	1539
QF		Less Quota Filled Respondents	142
EU		Universe of Eligible Numbers	10423

		COOPERATION RATE (AAPOR (2)) = I/(I+P)+RQ	81.6%
		e = (I+P+RQ+QF)/(I+P+RQ+QF+NER)	51.9%
		RESPONSE RATE (AAPOR RR(3)) = I+COOP(QF)/(I+P+RQ+QF+NER+e(UE))	17.3%

PART TIME FARMERS

This page intentionally left blank.

Results: Part Time Farmers USDA NRCS Part Time Farmers Customer Satisfaction Model



The 90% confidence interval for the Customer Satisfaction Index is +/- 2.1 points.

The above figure shows the customer satisfaction model for Part Time Farmers. The four boxes on the left hand side of the model (Field Office/Customer Service/Tech. Asst., Field Visit, Communication/Outreach, Application Process/Submission/Evaluation) represent drivers of satisfaction. The performance in each of these areas is shown by the scores in the oval, which are on a 0 to 100 scale, where 0 means poor and 100 means excellent. These scores are derived from the weighted average of the ratings from a grouping of questions about each area. The specific items for each driver are shown on the far left of the figure. Detailed scores for each of these areas are provided in this report. Generally, scores in the 80s and 90s indicate a strong level of performance.

These satisfaction drivers have a relationship to satisfaction or impact, the values of which are shown in the rectangles. These impact values are derived from a regression model using data from customer responses. Impacts represent the expected change in the customer satisfaction index given a five-point improvement in a driver area. For example, if the area of Communication/Outreach were to improve by five points from 84 to 89, the customer satisfaction index would increase by the value of its impact – 1.5 points to 84.5 as a result. As with scores, impacts are also relative to one another. A low impact or zero impact does not mean a component is unimportant. Rather, it means that a five-point change in that one component is unlikely to result in much improvement in Satisfaction at this time. Therefore, components with higher impacts are generally recommended for improvement first, especially if scores are lower for those components.

The right hand side of the model shows outcome behaviors such as likelihood to return, likelihood to recommend and confidence in programs from NRCS. These behaviors are driven by satisfaction and the impact satisfaction has on the behaviors is shown with their impact scores. There are two sets of numbers shown for the outcomes, the scores (on a 0 to 100 scale), which show the likelihood, or confidence that the respondent has. These are not percentages but rather are averages. The impacts shown reflect the impact that a five-point improvement in satisfaction would have on the behavior. Thus, a five-point improvement in satisfaction would increase the likelihood to return by 2.7 points to 93.7.

Customer Satisfaction

The **Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI)** is a weighted average of three questions. The questions are answered on 1 to 10 scale and converted to a 0 to 100 scale for reporting purposes. The three questions measure: Overall satisfaction, Satisfaction compared to expectations, and Satisfaction compared to an "ideal" organization. The model assigns the weights to each question in a way that maximizes the ability of the index to predict changes in agency satisfaction.

The 2008 Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI) for Part Time Farmers is 83 on a scale of 0 to 100.

This score indicates a high level of satisfaction and is 15 points above the federal government average (68).

Customer Satisfaction	83
Overall satisfaction	89
Compared to expectations	79
Compared to ideal	78

Drivers of Customer Satisfaction

Field Office/Customer Service/Technical Assistance

Impact on Satisfaction 0.3

Almost all of the Part Time Farmer respondents (96%) contacted NRCS to directly request assistance with concerns on their property and nearly all (97%) have visited an NRCS field office. Just under half (47%) of respondents scheduled a visit and slightly fewer (44%) have walked-in.

Contacted NRCS directly to request assistance with concerns on your property	
Yes	96%
No	4%
Don't Know	0%
Number of Respondents	250
Visited an NRCS field office	
Yes	97%
No	3%
Don't Know	0%
Number of Respondents	240
Scheduled visit or walked-in	
Scheduled visit	47%
Walked-in	44%
Don't Know	9%
Number of Respondents	233

For Part Time Farmers, Field Office/Customer Service/Technical Assistance had a relatively low impact on customers' satisfaction with an impact value of 0.3. Overall, this is a very high performing area with a performance score of 91. Ease of scheduling visit and professionalism of staff were the highest rated items in this area with scores of 93 for each. Availability of staff also received a strong rating of 89. Clearly, ratings indicate that at the field office customers are first finding the visits to be easy to schedule and once they are at the Field Office they find staff to be available and professional.

Field Office/Customer Service/Technical Assistance	91
Ease of scheduling a visit	93
Availability of staff	89
Professionalism of staff	93

Field Visit

Impact on Satisfaction 2.9

Ninety-two percent of Part Time Farmer respondents received a visit from NRCS to look at their farm or land. In most instances (94%) the same person from the field office also visited their farm or home.

Received a visit from NRCS to look at your farm or land	
Yes	92%
No	7%
Don't Know	0%
Number of Respondents	
250	
Same person from NRCS field office also visited your farm or home	
Yes	94%
No	4%
Did not visit the field office	0%
Don't Know	1%
Number of Respondents	
231	

The Field Visit has a very high impact on satisfaction for Part Time Farmers with an impact value of 2.9. The area of Field Visit also rates very high with a 90. The site visits are easy to schedule (91). The staff members were found to be knowledgeable and respondents thought they performed a thorough inventory of needs and opportunities on the customers' property (91). Follow up was in a timely manner (90) and the solutions that were provided were found to be practical (88). Even though performance is highly rated in the area of Field Visits, given the high impact it has on satisfaction even small improvement could drive satisfaction.

Field Visit	90
Ease of scheduling site visit	91
Knowledge of staff member making site visit	91
Performed a thorough inventory of your needs and opportunities on your property	91
Followed up with you in a timely manner	90
Provided practical solutions	88

Communication/Outreach

Impact on Satisfaction 1.5

Part Time Farmers had two-fifths (40%) mention Financial Assistance/Information as the most helpful type of assistance /information. Technical Assistance/Information was mentioned by one-quarter of Part Time Farmers as being the most helpful type of assistance and 18% mentioned Education Information. As for the reasons why Part Time Farmed thought farmers in community have chosen not to work with NRCS, distrust of government was mentioned by 20%. Fourteen percent thought it was because they thought farmers did not understand NRCS programs. Other responses accounted for 69% of responses. Verbatim comments are included in the Appendix D.

Most helpful types of assistance/information	
Technical Assistance/information	26%
Financial Assistance/information	40%
Information/education information	18%
Other	16%
Number of Respondents	
250	
Reasons why farmers in community have chosen not to work with NRCS*	
Did not qualify for NRCS Programs	4%
Do not understand NRCS Programs	14%
Past mistreatment/discrimination	1%
Conservation practices are too costly	4%
Distrust of Government/Do not want to work with Government	20%
Lacked funds to pay for upfront costs before reimbursement	4%
Other	69%
Number of Respondents	
250	

For Part Time Farmers, direct mail was the preferred method of receiving information with 67% selecting that choice. Thirty percent mentioned e-mail and 14% of Part Time Farmers preferred in-person. *Multiple answers were allowed so answers may not add to 100%.

Preferred method of receiving information*	
In-person	14%
Newspaper	9%
Fact Sheets	2%
Brochures	3%
Farm Magazines	1%
Direct Mail	67%
NRCS website	2%
Non Profit website	0%
Conservation District	0%
Email	30%
DVDs	0%
Computer online course	0%
Local meetings	3%
Demonstrations from a working farm	0%
Friends or neighbors	3%
Family	1%
Other	17%
Number of Respondents	250

Communications and outreach had a strong impact on satisfaction with an impact value of 1.5. This may be the best opportunity for NRCS to drive satisfaction with Part Time farmers. Performance is relatively strong with a score of 84. Respondents gave NRCS best ratings for the timeliness of information and the information addressing conservation needs – both were rated 86. Information being easy to understand was rated the lowest with a score of 80. Providing information in a manner that is easier to understand may be an opportunity to focus on with Part Time farmers.

Communication/Outreach	84
Information provided was timely	86
Information is easy to understand	80
Information provided addresses my conservation needs	86

Application Process/Submission/Evaluation

Impact on Satisfaction 0.6

Eighty-seven percent of Part Time Farmer respondents had applied for NRCS programs for cost share assistance.

Applied for any NRCS programs for cost share assistance	
Yes	87%
No	11%
Don't Know	2%
Number of Respondents	250

The application process/submission/evaluation had a modest impact on satisfaction for Part Time Farmers with an impact value of 0.6. This area received solid ratings overall with an 81. The application was rated as being relatively easy to submit and eligibility information was rated as being relatively clear (80). The response from NRCS was rated as being quick (82).

Application Process/Submission/Evaluation	81
Ease of submitting an application	82
Program eligibility information is clear	80
Quickness of the response received from NRCS	82

Outcomes

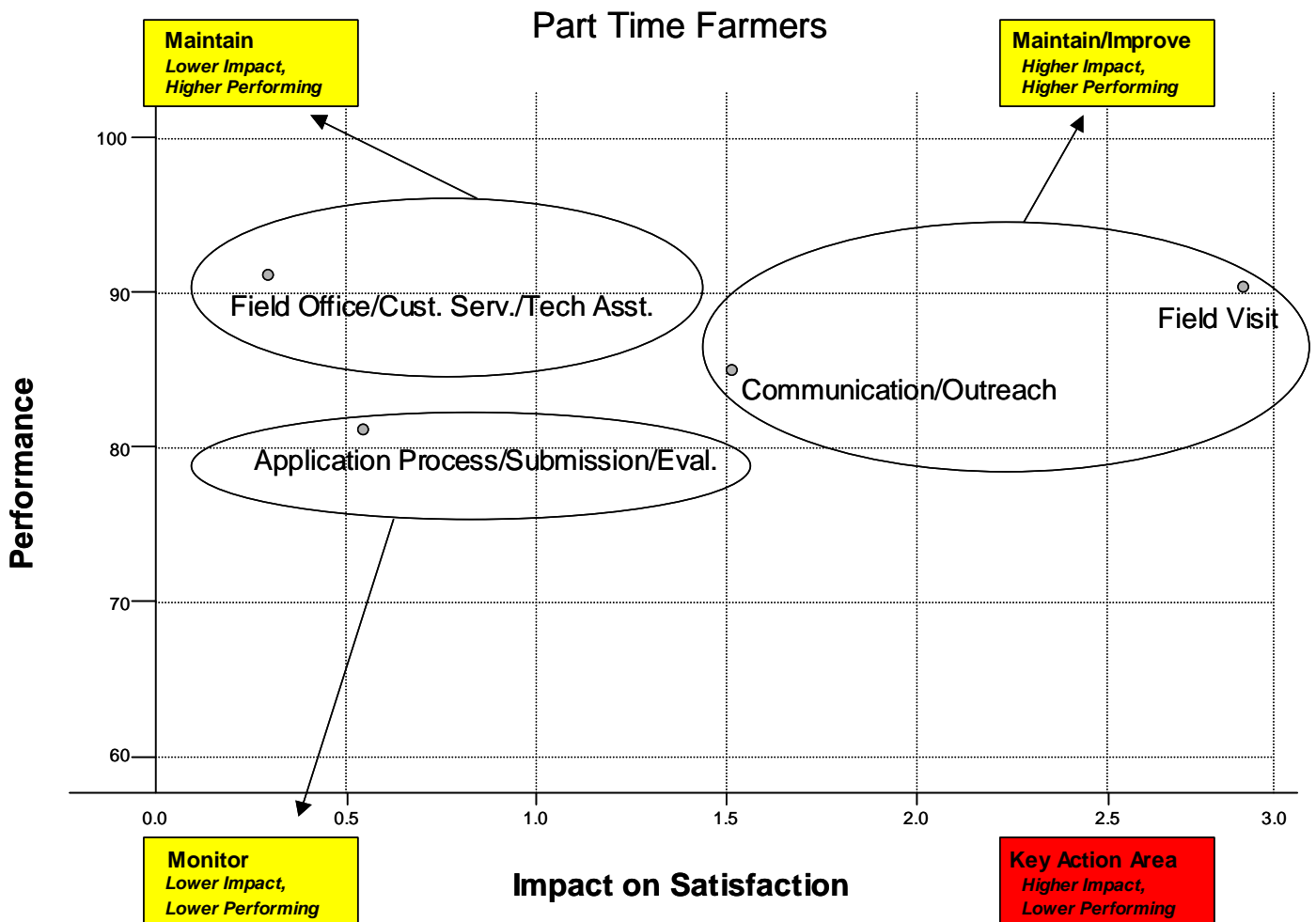
Three outcomes were measured for NRCS. Part Time Farmers were very likely to return to NRCS in the future with a score of 91. The outcome scores indicate a likelihood rating on a 0 to 100 scale and not a percentage. Part Time Farmers were even more likely to recommend NRCS (94). They also had a high degree of confidence in NRCS (86).

Likelihood to Return to NRCS in Future	91
Likelihood to Recommend NRCS	94
Confidence in NRCS	86

Recommendations

It is recommended to focus on the higher impact and lower performing areas as the highest priority. The chart below plots performance against impact on satisfaction for each driver of satisfaction. For Part Time Farmers field visits have the highest impact on customer satisfaction. However, this is also a high performing area, where even small improvement may be difficult to attain. Communications/Outreach while having a lower impact on satisfaction is in relative terms, a lower performing area and may provide more of an opportunity for improvement to drive satisfaction. In particular, communications and outreach that is easier to understand could be an area to target for improvement.

The application process/submission/evaluation has a lower impact on satisfaction. Relative to scores for the three other driver areas, it is a lower scoring area, but given the lower impact, application process/submission/evaluation should be monitored rather than improved at this time. Field office/customer service/technical assistance has the lowest impact on satisfaction of the driver areas and is high performing. Maintain current level of performance rather than targeting this area for improvement.



Demographics – Part Time Farmers

The tables on the follow two pages provide demographic information for the Part Time Farmer respondents.

Age	
Under 45	26%
45-54	28%
55-64	35%
65 and over	10%
Refused	1%
Number of Respondents	
250	
Race*	
White	93%
Black or African American	2%
American Indian or Alaska Native	0%
Asian	0%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	0%
Other race	4%
Don't Know	0%
Refused	1%
Number of Respondents	
250	
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin	
Yes	4%
No	94%
Don't Know	0%
Refused	1%
Number of Respondents	
250	
Full-time or part-time farmer	
Full-time	26%
Part-time	73%
Refused	1%
Number of Respondents	
250	
Farming as an individual/family farm or as a member of a business entity	
Individual/Family Farm	90%
Member of Business Entity	6%
Both Individual/Family and Member of Business Entity	3%
Don't Know	0%
Refused	0%
Number of Respondents	
250	

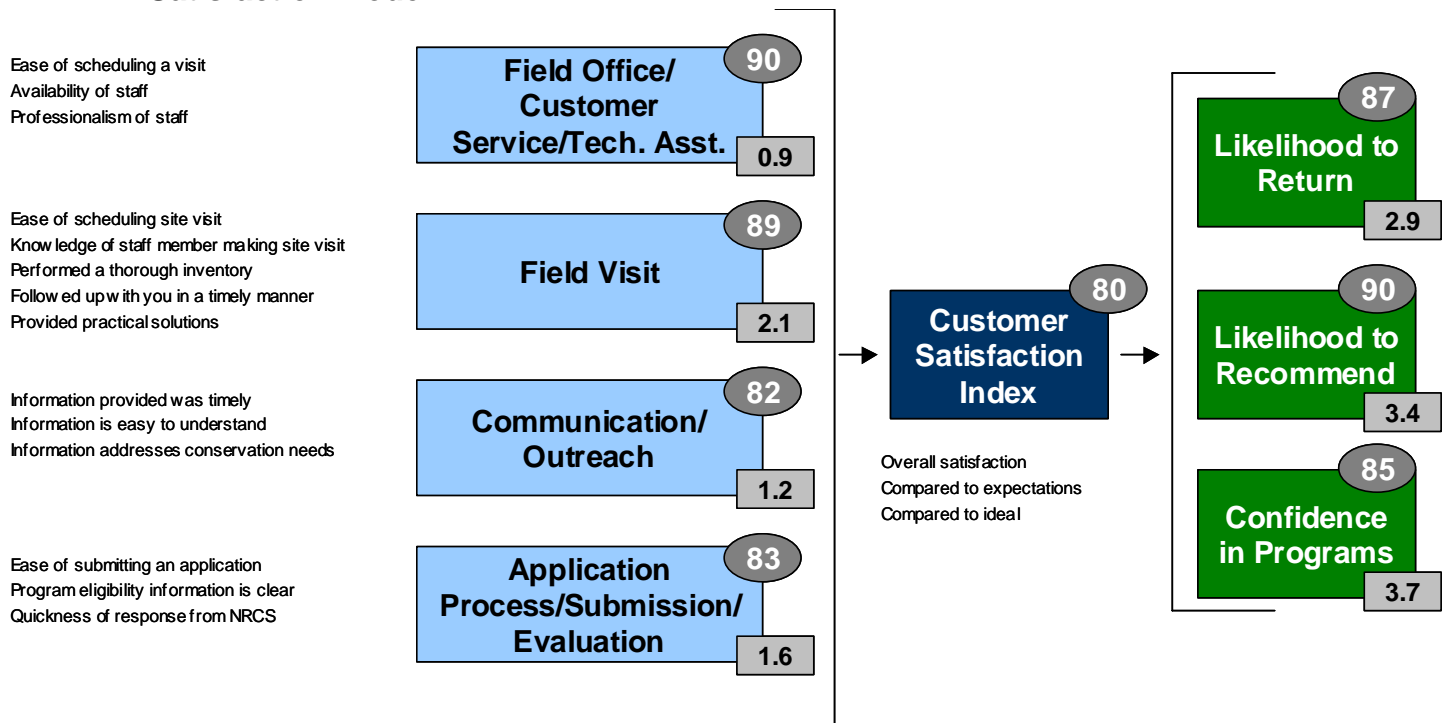
Demographics – Part Time Farmers (cont.)

Total annual income in 2007 before taxes	
Less than \$10,000	8%
Between \$10,000 and \$24,999	4%
Between \$25,000 and \$49,999	20%
Between \$50,000 and \$74,999	17%
Between \$75,000 and \$99,999	16%
Between \$100,000 and \$249,999	21%
\$250,000 or more	4%
Don't Know	5%
Refused	6%
Number of Respondents	250
Total annual gross FARM sales in 2007	
Less than \$10,000	36%
Between \$10,000 and \$24,999	22%
Between \$25,000 and \$99,999	22%
Between \$1000,000 and \$249,999	8%
\$250,000 or more	2%
Don't Know	6%
Refused	4%
Number of Respondents	250
Highest level of education completed	
Less than high school graduate	2%
High school graduate	17%
Some college	18%
Trade/technical/vocational training	5%
College graduate	30%
Post-graduate work/Degree	28%
Number of Respondents	250
Gender	
Male	78%
Female	22%
Number of Respondents	250

SOCIALLY DISADVANTAGED AND LIMITED RESOURCE FARMERS

This page intentionally left blank.

Results: Socially Disadvantaged and Limited Resource Farmers USDA NRCS Socially Disadvantaged and Limited Resource Farmers Customer Satisfaction Model



The 90% confidence interval for the Customer Satisfaction Index is +/- 2.1 points.

The above figure shows the customer satisfaction model for Socially Disadvantaged and Limited Resource Farmers. The four boxes on the left hand side of the model (Field Office/Customer Service/Tech. Asst., Field Visit, Communication/Outreach, Application Process/Submission/Evaluation) represent drivers of satisfaction. The performance in each of these areas is shown by the scores in the oval, which are on a 0 to 100 scale, where 0 means poor and 100 means excellent. These scores are derived from the weighted average of the ratings from a grouping of questions about each area. The specific items for each driver are shown on the far left of the figure. Detailed scores for each of these areas are provided in this report. Generally, scores in the 80s and 90s indicate a strong level of performance.

These satisfaction drivers have a relationship to satisfaction or impact, the values of which are shown in the rectangles. These impact scores are derived from a regression model using data from customer responses. Impacts represent the expected change in the customer satisfaction index given a five-point improvement in a driver area. For example, if the area of Communication/Outreach were to improve by five points from 82 to 87, the customer satisfaction index would increase by the value of its impact – 1.2 points to 81.2 as a result. As with scores, impacts are also relative to one another. A low impact or zero impact does not mean a component is unimportant. Rather, it means that a five-point change in that one component is unlikely to result in much improvement in Satisfaction at this time. Therefore, components with higher impacts are generally recommended for improvement first, especially if scores are lower for those components.

The right hand side of the model shows outcome behaviors such as likelihood to return, likelihood to recommend and confidence in programs from NRCS. These behaviors are driven by satisfaction and the impact satisfaction has on the behaviors is shown with their impact scores. There are two sets of numbers shown for the outcomes, the scores (on a 0 to 100 scale), which show the likelihood, or confidence that the respondent has. These are not percentages but rather are averages. The impacts shown reflect the impact that a five-point improvement in satisfaction would have on the behavior. Thus, a five-point improvement in satisfaction would increase the likelihood to return by 2.9 points to 89.9.

Customer Satisfaction

The **Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI)** is a weighted average of three questions. The questions are answered on 1 to 10 scale and converted to a 0 to 100 scale for reporting purposes. The three questions measure: Overall satisfaction, Satisfaction compared to expectations, and Satisfaction compared to an "ideal" organization. The model assigns the weights to each question in a way that maximizes the ability of the index to predict changes in agency satisfaction.

The 2008 Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI) for Socially Disadvantaged and Limited Resource Farmers is 80 on a scale of 0 to 100. This score indicates a high level of satisfaction and is 12 points above the federal government average (68).

Customer Satisfaction	80
Overall satisfaction	86
Compared to expectations	76
Compared to ideal	76

Drivers of Customer Satisfaction

Field Office/Customer Service/Technical Assistance

Impact on Satisfaction 0.9

Most of the Socially Disadvantaged and Limited Resource Farmers respondents (93%) contacted NRCS to directly request assistance with concerns on their property and nearly all (95%) have visited an NRCS field office. Just under half (49%) of respondents scheduled a visit and about two-fifths (41%) have walked-in.

Contacted NRCS directly to request assistance with concerns on your property	
Yes	93%
No	6%
Don't Know	1%
Number of Respondents	
251	
Visited an NRCS field office	
Yes	95%
No	4%
Don't Know	1%
Number of Respondents	
234	
Scheduled visit or walked-in	
Scheduled visit	49%
Walked-in	41%
Don't Know	10%
Number of Respondents	
222	

For Socially Disadvantaged and Limited Resource Farmers, Field Office/Customer Service/Technical Assistance had a moderate impact on customers' satisfaction with an impact value of 0.9. Respondents rated this as a very high performing area with a performance score of 90. Ease of scheduling visit (91) and professionalism of staff (92) were the highest rated items in this area with scores in the low 90s. Availability of staff also received a strong rating of 88. Socially Disadvantage and Limited Resource Farmers ratings indicate that visits are easy to schedule and once at the Field Office they find staff to be available and professional.

Field Office/Customer Service/Technical Assistance	90
Ease of scheduling a visit	91
Availability of staff	88
Professionalism of staff	92

Field Visit

Impact on Satisfaction 2.1

Ninety-one percent of Socially Disadvantaged and Limited Resource Farmer respondents received a visit from NRCS to look at their farm or land. For the most part, (88%) the same person from the field office also visited their farm or home.

Received a visit from NRCS to look at your farm or land	
Yes	91%
No	8%
Don't Know	1%
Number of Respondents	
251	
Same person from NRCS field office also visited your farm or home	
Yes	88%
No	7%
Did not visit the field office	2%
Don't Know	3%
Number of Respondents	
229	

The Field Visit has a high impact on satisfaction for Socially Disadvantaged and Limited Resource Farmer an impact value of 2.1. The area of Field Visit also rates very high with a score of 89. The site visits are easy to schedule (91). The staff members were found to be knowledgeable (91) and respondents thought they performed a thorough inventory of needs and opportunities on the customers' property (88). Follow up was in a timely manner (89). While providing practical solutions was the lowest rated item in this area (86), the rating indicates that most find the solutions to be practical.

Field Visit	89
Ease of scheduling site visit	91
Knowledge of staff member making site visit	91
Performed a through inventory of your needs and opportunities on your property	88
Followed up with you in a timely manner	89
Provided practical solutions	86

Communication/Outreach

Impact on Satisfaction 1.2

One-third of Socially Disadvantaged and Limited Resource Farmers mention Financial Assistance/Information as the most helpful type of assistance /information. Technical Assistance/Information was mentioned by one-quarter (24%) of Socially Disadvantaged and Limited Resource Farmers as being the most helpful type of assistance and one-quarter (26%) mentioned Education Information.

As for the reasons Socially Disadvantaged and Limited Resource Farmers thought farmers in the community have chosen not to work with NRCS, distrust of government was mentioned by 13%. Twelve percent thought it was because they thought farmers did not understand NRCS programs. Other responses accounted for 77% of responses. Verbatim comments are included in the Appendix D.

Most helpful types of assistance/information	
Technical Assistance/information	24%
Financial Assistance/information	33%
Information/education information	26%
Other	16%
Number of Respondents	251
Reasons why farmers in community have chosen not to work with NRCS*	
Did not qualify for NRCS Programs	3%
Do not understand NRCS Programs	12%
Past mistreatment/discrimination	2%
Conservation practices are too costly	4%
Distrust of Government/Do not want to work with Government	13%
Lacked funds to pay for upfront costs before reimbursement	6%
Other	77%
Number of Respondents	251

For Socially Disadvantaged and Limited Resource Farmers, direct mail was the preferred method of receiving information with 73% selecting that choice. Only 18% mentioned e-mail and 16% of Socially Disadvantaged and Limited Resource Farmers preferred in-person. *Multiple answers were allowed so answers may not add to 100%.

Preferred method of receiving information*	
In-person	16%
Newspaper	5%
Fact Sheets	1%
Brochures	3%
Farm Magazines	2%
Direct Mail	73%
NRCS website	1%
Non Profit website	0%
Conservation District	1%
Email	18%
DVDs	0%
Computer online course	0%
Local meetings	1%
Demonstrations from a working farm	0%
Friends or neighbors	4%
Family	1%
Other	19%
Number of Respondents	251

Communications and outreach had a relatively strong impact on satisfaction among Socially Disadvantaged and Limited Resource Farmers with an impact value of 1.2. Performance in this area was solid with a score of 82. Respondents gave NRCS best ratings for the timeliness of information (85). For the most part information was addressing conservation needs for Socially Disadvantaged and Limited Resource Farmer with a rating of 82. Information being easy to understand was rated the lowest with a score of 79.

Communication/Outreach	82
Information provided was timely	85
Information is easy to understand	79
Information provided addresses my conservation needs	82

Application Process/Submission/Evaluation

Impact on Satisfaction 1.6

Eighty-two percent of Socially Disadvantaged and Limited Resource Farmers respondents had applied for NRCS programs for cost share assistance.

Applied for any NRCS programs for cost share assistance	
Yes	82%
No	15%
Don't Know	3%
Number of Respondents	251

The application process/submission/evaluation had a strong on satisfaction for Socially Disadvantaged and Limited Resource Farmers with an impact value of 1.6. While this area received solid ratings overall with an 83, given the high impact it has on satisfaction it is also an area to target for improvement. The application was rated as being easy to submit (85) and eligibility information was rated as being clear (83). The response from NRCS was rated a solid score of 80, but there may be opportunity to improve this area.

Application Process/Submission/Evaluation	83
Ease of submitting an application	85
Program eligibility information is clear	83
Quickness of the response received from NRCS	80

Outcomes

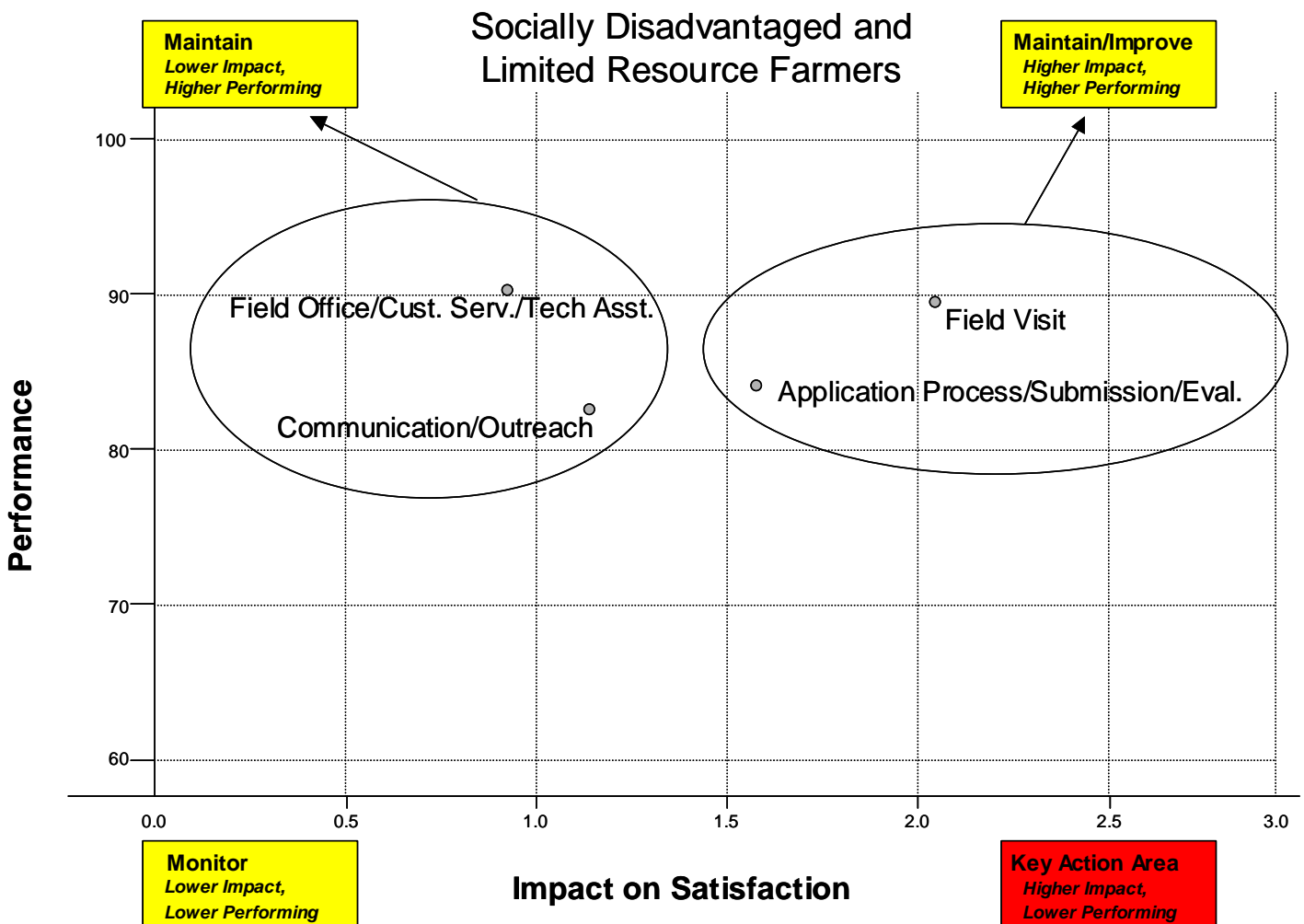
Three outcomes were measured for NRCS. The outcome scores indicate a likelihood rating on a 0 to 100 scale and not a percentage. Socially Disadvantaged and Limited Resource Farmers were relatively likely to return to NRCS in the future with a score of 87. They were likely to recommend NRCS (90) and had a high degree of confidence in NRCS (85).

Likelihood to Return to NRCS in Future	87
Likelihood to Recommend NRCS	90
Confidence in NRCS	85

Recommendations

It is recommended to focus on the higher impact and lower performing areas as the highest priority. Field Visits have the highest impact on customer satisfaction for Socially Disadvantaged and Limited Resource Farmers. This is also a high performing area, where even small improvement may be difficult to attain. The area of applications process/submission/evaluation is another high impact area, but it is lower rated and likely a better choice for an opportunity to improve or build upon an area of strength. In particular, quickness of response was the lowest rated item in the application process area.

Communications/Outreach has a lower impact on satisfaction but as a secondary priority could be an area to target given that it is the lowest rated driver area. The area of field office/customer service/technical assistance is a lower impact, higher performing area that should not be targeted for improvement at this time. Instead the focus should be on maintaining the high level of performance for Field office/customer service/technical assistance.



The tables on the follow two pages provide demographic information for the Socially Disadvantaged and Limited Resource Farmer respondents.

Demographics – Socially Disadvantaged and Limited Resource Farmers

Age	
Under 45	11%
45-54	24%
55-64	30%
65 and over	33%
Refused	1%
Number of Respondents	
251	
Race*	
White	81%
Black or African American	9%
American Indian or Alaska Native	5%
Asian	1%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	2%
Other race	4%
Don't Know	0%
Refused	1%
Number of Respondents	
251	
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin	
Yes	6%
No	93%
Don't Know	1%
Refused	0%
Number of Respondents	
251	
Full-time or part-time farmer	
Full-time	61%
Part-time	34%
Refused	5%
Number of Respondents	
251	
Farming as an individual/family farm or as a member of a business entity	
Individual/Family Farm	90%
Member of Business Entity	5%
Both Individual/Family and Member of Business Entity	4%
Don't Know	0%
Refused	0%
Number of Respondents	
251	

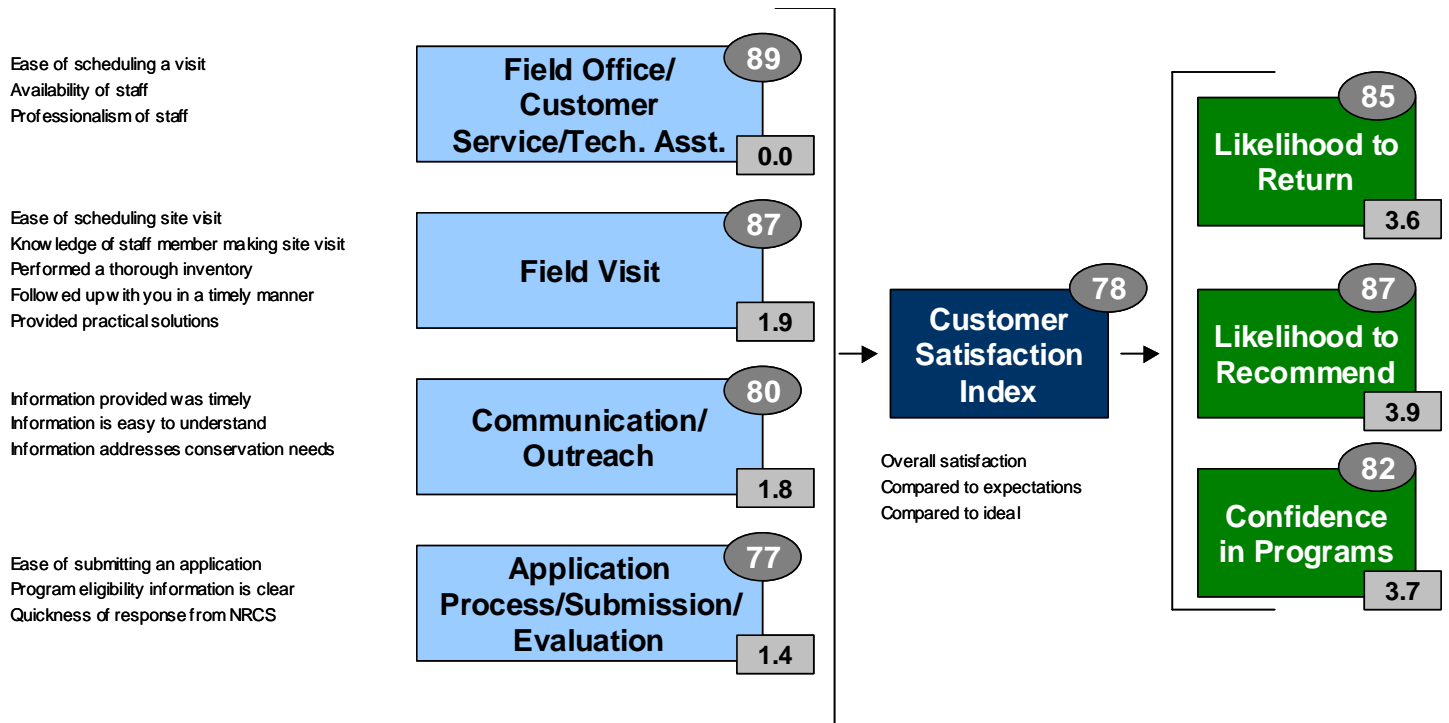
Demographics – Socially Disadvantaged and Limited Resource Farmers (cont.)

Total annual income in 2007 before taxes	
Less than \$10,000	11%
Between \$10,000 and \$24,999	14%
Between \$25,000 and \$49,999	20%
Between \$50,000 and \$74,999	13%
Between \$75,000 and \$99,999	5%
Between \$100,000 and \$249,999	12%
\$250,000 or more	5%
Don't Know	8%
Refused	11%
Number of Respondents	251
Total annual gross FARM sales in 2007	
Less than \$10,000	34%
Between \$10,000 and \$24,999	15%
Between \$25,000 and \$99,999	19%
Between \$100,000 and \$249,999	7%
\$250,000 or more	6%
Don't Know	10%
Refused	9%
Number of Respondents	251
Highest level of education completed	
Less than high school graduate	4%
High school graduate	24%
Some college	24%
Trade/technical/vocational training	4%
College graduate	28%
Post-graduate work/Degree	16%
Number of Respondents	251
Gender	
Male	35%
Female	65%
Number of Respondents	251

SPECIALTY CROP FARMERS

This page intentionally left blank.

Results: Specialty Crop Farmers USDA NRCS Specialty Crop Farmers Customer Satisfaction Model



The 90% confidence interval for the Customer Satisfaction Index is +/- 2.1 points.

The above figure shows the customer satisfaction model for Specialty Crop Farmers. The four boxes on the left hand side of the model (Field Office/Customer Service/Tech. Asst., Field Visit, Communication/Outreach, Application Process/Submission/Evaluation) represent drivers of satisfaction. The performance in each of these areas is shown by the scores in the oval, which are on a 0 to 100 scale, where 0 means poor and 100 means excellent. These scores are derived from the weighted average of the ratings from a grouping of questions about each area. The specific items for each driver are shown on the far left of the figure. Detailed scores for each of these areas are provided in this report. Generally, scores in the 80s and 90s indicate a strong level of performance.

These satisfaction drivers have a relationship to satisfaction or impact, the values of which are shown in the rectangles. These impact scores are derived from a regression model using data from customer responses. Impacts represent the expected change in the customer satisfaction index given a five-point improvement in a driver area. For example, if the area of Communication/Outreach were to improve by five points from 80 to 85, the customer satisfaction index would increase by the value of its impact – 1.8 points to 79.8 as a result. As with scores, impacts are also relative to one another. A low impact or zero impact does not mean a component is unimportant. Rather, it means that a five-point change in that one component is unlikely to result in much improvement in Satisfaction at this time. Therefore, components with higher impacts are generally recommended for improvement first, especially if scores are lower for those components.

The right hand side of the model shows outcome behaviors such as likelihood to return, likelihood to recommend and confidence in programs from NRCS. These behaviors are driven by satisfaction and the impact satisfaction has on the behaviors is shown with their impact scores. There are two sets of numbers shown for the outcomes, the scores (on a 0 to 100 scale), which show the likelihood, or confidence that the respondent has. These are not percentages but rather are averages. The impacts shown reflect the impact that a five-point improvement in satisfaction would have on the behavior. Thus, a five-point improvement in satisfaction would increase the likelihood to return by 3.6 points to 88.6.

Customer Satisfaction

The **Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI)** is a weighted average of three questions. The questions are answered on 1 to 10 scale and converted to a 0 to 100 scale for reporting purposes. The three questions measure: Overall satisfaction, Satisfaction compared to expectations, and Satisfaction compared to an “ideal” organization. The model assigns the weights to each question in a way that maximizes the ability of the index to predict changes in agency satisfaction.

The 2008 Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI) for Specialty Crop Farmers is 78 on a scale of 0 to 100. This score indicates a high level of satisfaction and is 10 points above the federal government average (68).

Customer Satisfaction	78
Overall satisfaction	84
Compared to expectations	75
Compared to ideal	73

Drivers of Customer Satisfaction

Field Office/Customer Service/Technical Assistance

Impact on Satisfaction 0.0

Most of the Specialty Crop Farmer respondents (91%) contacted NRCS to directly request assistance with concerns on their property and in most cases (90%) they have visited an NRCS field office. Just under half (48%) of the respondents scheduled a visit and 43% have walked-in.

Contacted NRCS directly to request assistance with concerns on your property	
Yes	91%
No	8%
Don't Know	1%
Number of Respondents	236
Visited an NRCS field office	
Yes	90%
No	8%
Don't Know	1%
Number of Respondents	215
Scheduled visit or walked-in	
Scheduled visit	48%
Walked-in	43%
Don't Know	9%
Number of Respondents	194

For Specialty Crop Farmers Field Office/Customer Service/Technical Assistance had an impact of 0.0 on customer satisfaction. This does not mean that this area is unimportant to customers, but rather than an increase in performance will not drive satisfaction. Respondents rated this as a high performing area with a performance score of 89. Ease of scheduling visit (89) and professionalism of staff (91) were rated highest. Availability of staff, while scoring slightly lower (86) still had a score that indicated availability was not an issue for customers. Given the impact of zero in this area, NRCS should use resources to improve this area, but rather maintain the current level of performance.

Field Office/Customer Service/Technical Assistance	89
Ease of scheduling a visit	89
Availability of staff	86
Professionalism of staff	91

Field Visit

Impact on Satisfaction 1.9

Eighty-nine percent of Specialty Crop Farmer respondents received a visit from NRCS to look at their farm or land. Four out of five times (80%) the same person from the field office also visited their farm or home.

Received a visit from NRCS to look at your farm or land	
Yes	89%
No	10%
Don't Know	1%
Number of Respondents	
236	
Same person from NRCS field office also visited your farm or home	
Yes	80%
No	10%
Did not visit the field office	6%
Don't Know	4%
Number of Respondents	
210	

The Field Visit has a very high impact on satisfaction for Specialty Crop Farmers with an impact value of 1.9. The area of Field Visit rates high with a score of 87. The site visits are easy to schedule (89) and staff members were found to be knowledgeable (89). Respondents thought staff performed a thorough inventory of needs and opportunities on their property (87). Follow up was mostly in a timely manner (87). While a rating of 84 for providing practical solutions indicates that for most the solution was practical, there may be an opportunity to improve upon this score. Given the high impact that field visit has on satisfaction, this should be an area to target for improvement.

Field Visit	87
Ease of scheduling site visit	89
Knowledge of staff member making site visit	89
Performed a through inventory of your needs and opportunities on your property	87
Followed up with you in a timely manner	87
Provided practical solutions	84

Communication/Outreach

Impact on Satisfaction 1.8

One-third of Specialty Crop Farmers mention Financial Assistance/Information as the most helpful type of assistance /information. Technical Assistance/Information was mentioned by nearly that same amount (31%) as being the most helpful type of assistance and one-fifth (21%) mentioned Education Information.

As for the reasons Specialty Crop Farmers thought farmers in the community have chosen not to work with NRCS, distrust of government was mentioned by 22%. Eleven percent thought it was because they thought farmers did not understand NRCS programs. Other responses accounted for 78% of responses. Verbatim comments are included in the Appendix D.

Most helpful types of assistance/information	
Technical Assistance/information	31%
Financial Assistance/information	33%
Information/education information	21%
Other	15%
Number of Respondents	
236	
Reasons why farmers in community have chosen not to work with NRCS*	
Did not qualify for NRCS Programs	4%
Do not understand NRCS Programs	11%
Past mistreatment/discrimination	3%
Conservation practices are too costly	3%
Distrust of Government/Do not want to work with Government	22%
Lacked funds to pay for upfront costs before reimbursement	5%
Other	78%
Number of Respondents	
236	

For Specialty Crop Farmers, direct mail was the preferred method of receiving information with 62% selecting that choice. Over one-quarter (27%) mentioned e-mail and 18% of Specialty Crop Farmers preferred in-person. *Multiple answers were allowed so answers may not add to 100%.

Preferred method of receiving information*	
In-person	18%
Newspaper	8%
Fact Sheets	1%
Brochures	8%
Farm Magazines	3%
Direct Mail	62%
NRCS website	1%
Non Profit website	0%
Conservation District	0%
Email	27%
DVDs	0%
Computer online course	0%
Local meetings	0%
Demonstrations from a working farm	0%
Friends or neighbors	0%
Family	0%
Other	19%
Number of Respondents	
236	

Communications and outreach had a strong impact on satisfaction of Specialty Crop Farmers with an impact value of 1.8. This may be the best opportunity for NRCS to drive satisfaction with Specialty Crop Farmers. Performance is solid, but with a score of 80 it is lower than other areas measured. Respondents gave NRCS best ratings in the area of communications/outreach for the timeliness of information and the information addressing conservation needs – both were rated 81. Information being easy to understand was rated the lowest with a score of 77. Providing information in a manner that is easier to understand, more timely and better addressing the needs of Specialty Crop Farmers appear to be opportunities to improve.

Communication/Outreach	80
Information provided was timely	81
Information is easy to understand	77
Information provided addresses my conservation needs	81

Application Process/Submission/Evaluation

Impact on Satisfaction 1.4

Eighty-one percent of Specialty Crop Farmers respondents had applied for NRCS programs for cost share assistance.

Applied for any NRCS programs for cost share assistance	
Yes	81%
No	18%
Don't Know	1%
Number of Respondents	
	236

The application process/submission/evaluation had a sizable impact on satisfaction for Specialty Crop Farmers with an impact value of 1.4. This was the lowest rated area by Specialty Crop Farmers and an area that should be targeted for improvement. Quickness of response was the highest rated item in this area (79). Ease of submitting an application (77) and clarity of program information (76) may be particular items to target for improvement.

Application Process/Submission/Evaluation	77
Ease of submitting an application	77
Program eligibility information is clear	76
Quickness of the response received from NRCS	79

Outcomes

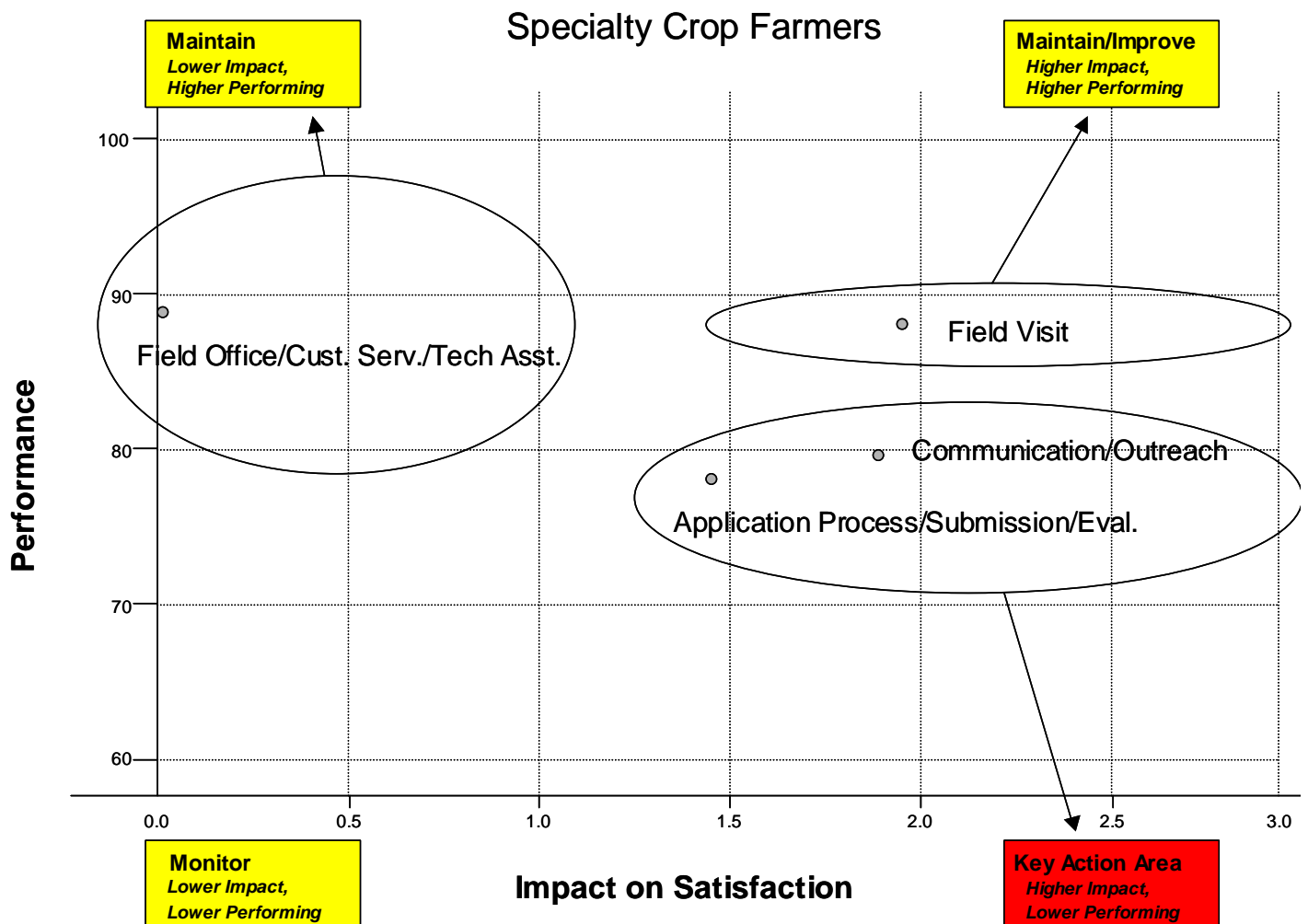
Three outcomes were measured for NRCS. The outcome scores indicate a likelihood rating on a 0 to 100 scale and not a percentage. Specialty Crop Farmers were mostly likely to return to NRCS in the future with a score of 85. Specialty Crop Farmers were mostly likely to recommend NRCS (87). They also had a relatively high degree of confidence in NRCS (82).

Likelihood to Return to NRCS in Future	85
Likelihood to Recommend NRCS	87
Confidence in NRCS	82

Recommendations

It is recommended to focus on the higher impact and lower performing areas as the highest priority. Field Visits have the highest impact on customer satisfaction for Specialty Crop Farmer, but this is also a high performing area, where even small improvement may be difficult to attain. Maintaining performance rather than targeting for improvement should be the course of action with field visits. The areas of communication/outreach and applications process/submission/evaluation are the key action areas, which have high impacts and relative to other areas, are lower performing. The application process could be improved for Specialty Crop Farmers by providing clearer program eligibility information, improving the application submission process and with quicker responses to Specialty Crop Farmers from NRCS. With respect to communications/outreach, the focus should be on providing Specialty Crop Farmers with information that is easier to understand.

Field Office/Customer Service/Technical Assistance has a very low impact on satisfaction and is a high performing area, maintain the current level of performance rather than target this area for improvement at this time.



Demographics – Specialty Crop Farmers

The tables on the follow two pages provide demographic information for the Specialty Crop Farmer respondents.

Age	
Under 45	17%
45-54	34%
55-64	28%
65 and over	19%
Refused	2%
Number of Respondents	
236	
Race*	
White	85%
Black or African American	6%
American Indian or Alaska Native	1%
Asian	3%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	1%
Other race	3%
Don't Know	0%
Refused	3%
Number of Respondents	
236	
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin	
Yes	4%
No	95%
Don't Know	1%
Refused	0%
Number of Respondents	
236	
Full-time or part-time farmer	
Full-time	73%
Part-time	25%
Refused	2%
Number of Respondents	
236	
Farming as an individual/family farm or as a member of a business entity	
Individual/Family Farm	78%
Member of Business Entity	12%
Both Individual/Family and Member of Business Entity	8%
Don't Know	1%
Refused	0%
Number of Respondents	
236	

Demographics – Specialty Crop Farmers (cont.)

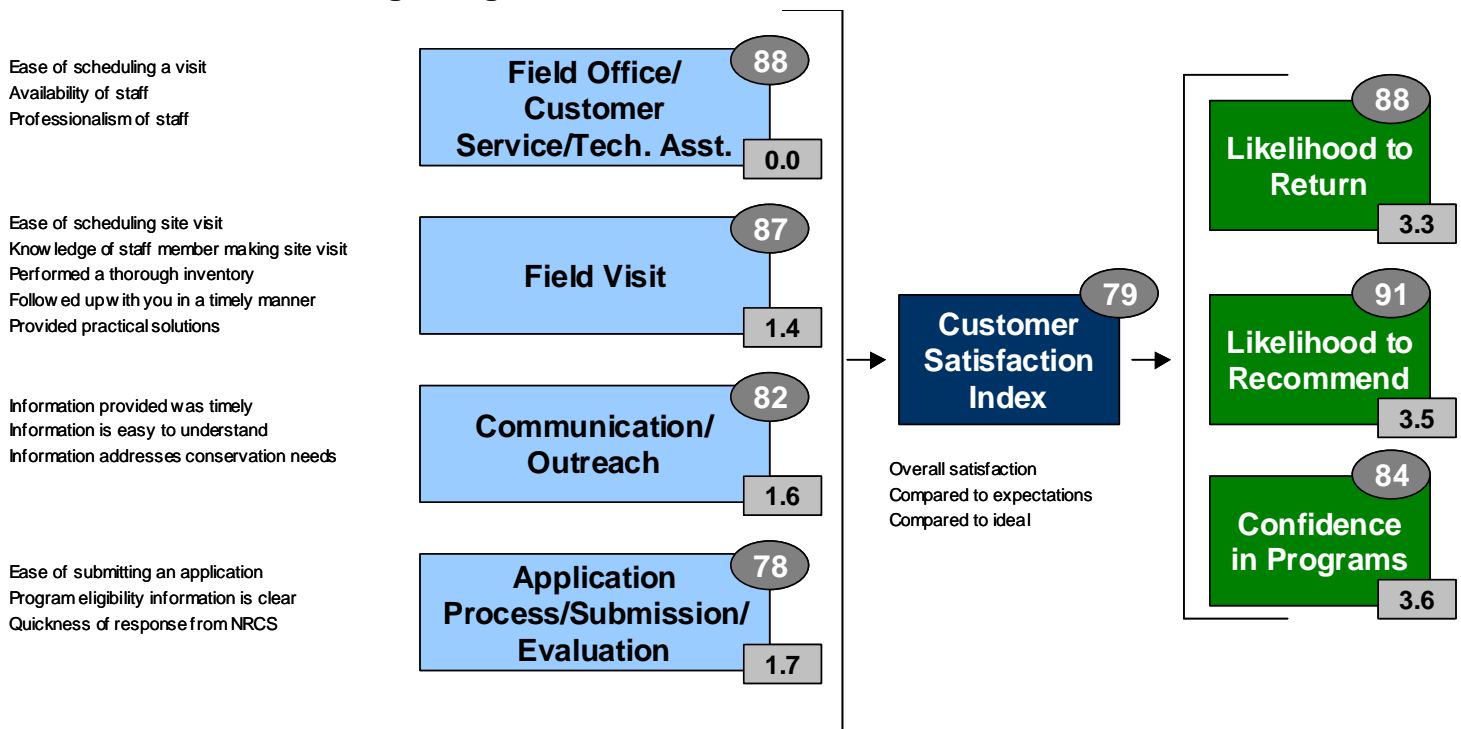
Total annual income in 2007 before taxes	
Less than \$10,000	7%
Between \$10,000 and \$24,999	8%
Between \$25,000 and \$49,999	14%
Between \$50,000 and \$74,999	17%
Between \$75,000 and \$99,999	9%
Between \$100,000 and \$249,999	20%
\$250,000 or more	13%
Don't Know	3%
Refused	8%
Number of Respondents	236
Total annual gross FARM sales in 2007	
Less than \$10,000	17%
Between \$10,000 and \$24,999	12%
Between \$25,000 and \$99,999	17%
Between \$100,000 and \$249,999	16%
\$250,000 or more	28%
Don't Know	4%
Refused	6%
Number of Respondents	236
Highest level of education completed	
Less than high school graduate	2%
High school graduate	17%
Some college	17%
Trade/technical/vocational training	6%
College graduate	39%
Post-graduate work/Degree	19%
Number of Respondents	236
Gender	
Male	82%
Female	18%
Number of Respondents	236

BEGINNING FARMERS

This page intentionally left blank.

Results: Beginning Farmers

USDA NRCS Beginning Farmers Customer Satisfaction Model



The 90% confidence interval for the Customer Satisfaction Index is +/- 2.1 points.

The above figure shows the customer satisfaction model for Beginning Farmers. The four boxes on the left hand side of the model (Field Office/Customer Service/Tech. Asst., Field Visit, Communication/Outreach, Application Process/Submission/Evaluation) represent drivers of satisfaction. The performance in each of these areas is shown by the scores in the oval, which are on a 0 to 100 scale, where 0 means poor and 100 means excellent. These scores are derived from the weighted average of the ratings from a grouping of questions about each area. The specific items for each driver are shown on the far left of the figure. Detailed scores for each of these areas are provided in this report. Generally, scores in the 80s and 90s indicate a strong level of performance.

These satisfaction drivers have a relationship to satisfaction or impact, the values of which are shown in the rectangles. These impact scores are derived from a regression model using data from customer responses. Impacts represent the expected change in the customer satisfaction index given a five-point improvement in a driver area. For example, if the area of Communication/Outreach were to improve by five points from 82 to 87, the customer satisfaction index would increase by the value of its impact – 1.6 points to 80.6 as a result. As with scores, impacts are also relative to one another. A low impact or zero impact does not mean a component is unimportant. Rather, it means that a five-point change in that one component is unlikely to result in much improvement in Satisfaction at this time. Therefore, components with higher impacts are generally recommended for improvement first, especially if scores are lower for those components.

The right hand side of the model shows outcome behaviors such as likelihood to return, likelihood to recommend and confidence in programs from NRCS. These behaviors are driven by satisfaction and the impact satisfaction has on the behaviors is shown with their impact scores. There are two sets of numbers shown for the outcomes, the scores (on a 0 to 100 scale) which show the likelihood or confidence that the respondent has. These are not percentages but rather are averages. The impacts shown reflect the impact that a five-point improvement in satisfaction would have on the behavior. Thus, a five-point improvement in satisfaction would increase the likelihood to return by 3.3 points to 91.3.

Customer Satisfaction

The **Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI)** is a weighted average of three questions. The questions are answered on 1 to 10 scale and converted to a 0 to 100 scale for reporting purposes. The three questions measure: Overall satisfaction, Satisfaction compared to expectations, and Satisfaction compared to an “ideal” organization. The model assigns the weights to each question in a way that maximizes the ability of the index to predict changes in agency satisfaction.

The 2008 Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI) for Beginning Farmers is 79 on a scale of 0 to 100. This score indicates a high level of satisfaction and is 11 points above the federal government average (68).

Customer Satisfaction	79
Overall satisfaction	84
Compared to expectations	74
Compared to ideal	76

Drivers of Customer Satisfaction

Field Office/Customer Service/Technical Assistance

Impact on Satisfaction 0.0

Nearly all of the Beginning Farmer respondents (95%) contacted NRCS to directly request assistance with concerns on their property and in nearly all of those cases (96%) they have visited an NRCS field office. Just under half (47%) of the respondents have walked-in, while 45% have scheduled a visit.

Contacted NRCS directly to request assistance with concerns on your property	
Yes	95%
No	3%
Don't Know	2%
Number of Respondents	250
Visited an NRCS field office	
Yes	96%
No	3%
Don't Know	0%
Number of Respondents	237
Scheduled visit or walked-in	
Scheduled visit	45%
Walked-in	47%
Don't Know	7%
Number of Respondents	228

For Beginning Farmers Field Office/Customer Service/Technical Assistance had an impact of 0.0 on customer satisfaction. This does not mean that this area is unimportant to them, but rather than an increase in performance will not drive satisfaction. Beginning Farmers rated this as a high performing area with a performance score of 88. Ease of scheduling visit and professionalism of staff were rated highest – both scored 90. Availability of staff, while scoring somewhat lower (85) still rated highly enough to indicate availability was not an issue for Beginning Farmers. Given the impact of zero in this area, NRCS should not use resources to improve this area, but rather maintain the current level of performance.

Field Office/Customer Service/Technical Assistance	88
Ease of scheduling a visit	90
Availability of staff	85
Professionalism of staff	90

Field Visit

Impact on Satisfaction 1.4

Ninety-four percent of Specialty Crop Farmer respondents received a visit from NRCS to look at their farm or land. Usually (89%) the same person from the field office also visited their farm or home.

Received a visit from NRCS to look at your farm or land	
Yes	94%
No	4%
Don't Know	2%
Number of Respondents	
250	
Same person from NRCS field office also visited your farm or home	
Yes	89%
No	8%
Did not visit the field office	1%
Don't Know	2%
Number of Respondents	
235	

The Field Visit has a sizable impact on satisfaction for Beginning Farmers with an impact value of 1.4. The area of Field Visit also rates high with a score of 87. The site visits are easy to schedule (88) and the staff members were found to be knowledgeable (88). Beginning Farmers thought staff performed a thorough inventory of needs and opportunities on their property (86). Follow up was rated as being done in a timely manner (86) and the solutions that were provide were found to be practical (85).

Field Visit	87
Ease of scheduling site visit	88
Knowledge of staff member making site visit	88
Performed a through inventory of your needs and opportunities on your property	86
Followed up with you in a timely manner	86
Provided practical solutions	85

Communication/Outreach

Impact on Satisfaction 1.6

Two-fifths of Beginning Farmers mention Financial Assistance/Information as the most helpful type of assistance /information. Technical Assistance/Information was mentioned by one-quarter (26%) as being the most helpful type of assistance and 18% mentioned Education Information.

As for the reasons Beginning Farmers thought farmers in the community have chosen not to work with NRCS, distrust of government was mentioned by 20%. Fourteen percent thought it was because they thought farmers did not understand NRCS programs. Other responses accounted for 69% of responses. Verbatim comments are included in the Appendix D.

Most helpful types of assistance/information	
Technical Assistance/information	26%
Financial Assistance/information	40%
Information/education information	18%
Other	16%
Number of Respondents	
250	
Reasons why farmers in community have chosen not to work with NRCS*	
Did not qualify for NRCS Programs	4%
Do not understand NRCS Programs	14%
Past mistreatment/discrimination	1%
Conservation practices are too costly	4%
Distrust of Government/Do not want to work with Government	20%
Lacked funds to pay for upfront costs before reimbursement	4%
Other	69%
Number of Respondents	
250	

For Beginning Farmers, direct mail was the preferred method of receiving information with 68 % selecting that choice. One-quarter of Beginning Farmers (25%) mentioned e-mail as preferred method and 14% of Beginning Farmers preferred in-person. *Multiple answers were allowed so answers may not add to 100%.

Preferred method of receiving information*	
In-person	14%
Newspaper	6%
Fact Sheets	0%
Brochures	4%
Farm Magazines	1%
Direct Mail	68%
NRCS website	4%
Non Profit website	1%
Conservation District	1%
Email	25%
DVDs	0%
Computer online course	0%
Local meetings	1%
Demonstrations from a working farm	0%
Friends or neighbors	3%
Family	2%
Other	15%
Number of Respondents	250

Communications and outreach had a strong impact on satisfaction with an impact value of 1.6. Performance is relatively strong in this area with a score of 82. Respondents gave NRCS best ratings for the timeliness of information and the information addressing conservation needs – both were rated 84. Information being easy to understand was rated lower at 78. Providing information in a manner that is easier to understand may be a secondary opportunity to improve satisfaction of Beginning Farmers.

Communication/Outreach	82
Information provided was timely	84
Information is easy to understand	78
Information provided addresses my conservation needs	84

Application Process/Submission/Evaluation

Impact on Satisfaction 1.7

Eighty-seven percent of Beginning Farmers respondents had applied for NRCS programs for cost share assistance.

Applied for any NRCS programs for cost share assistance	
Yes	87%
No	11%
Don't Know	2%
Number of Respondents	250

The application process/submission/evaluation had a strong impact on satisfaction for Beginning Farmers with an impact value of 1.7. Application process/submission/evaluation among Beginning Farmers should be a key action area for NRCS. This was the lowest rated area by Beginning Farmers and had the highest impact on satisfaction. Quickness of response (78), ease of submitting an application (79) and clarity of program information (77) all appear to be particular items to target for improvement.

Application Process/Submission/Evaluation	78
Ease of submitting an application	79
Program eligibility information is clear	77
Quickness of the response received from NRCS	78

Outcomes

Three outcomes were measured for NRCS. The outcome scores indicate a likelihood rating on a 0 to 100 scale and not a percentage. Beginning Farmers were mostly likely to return to NRCS in the future with a score of 88. Beginning Farmers were quite likely to recommend NRCS (91). Beginning Farmers also had a relatively high degree of confidence in NRCS (84).

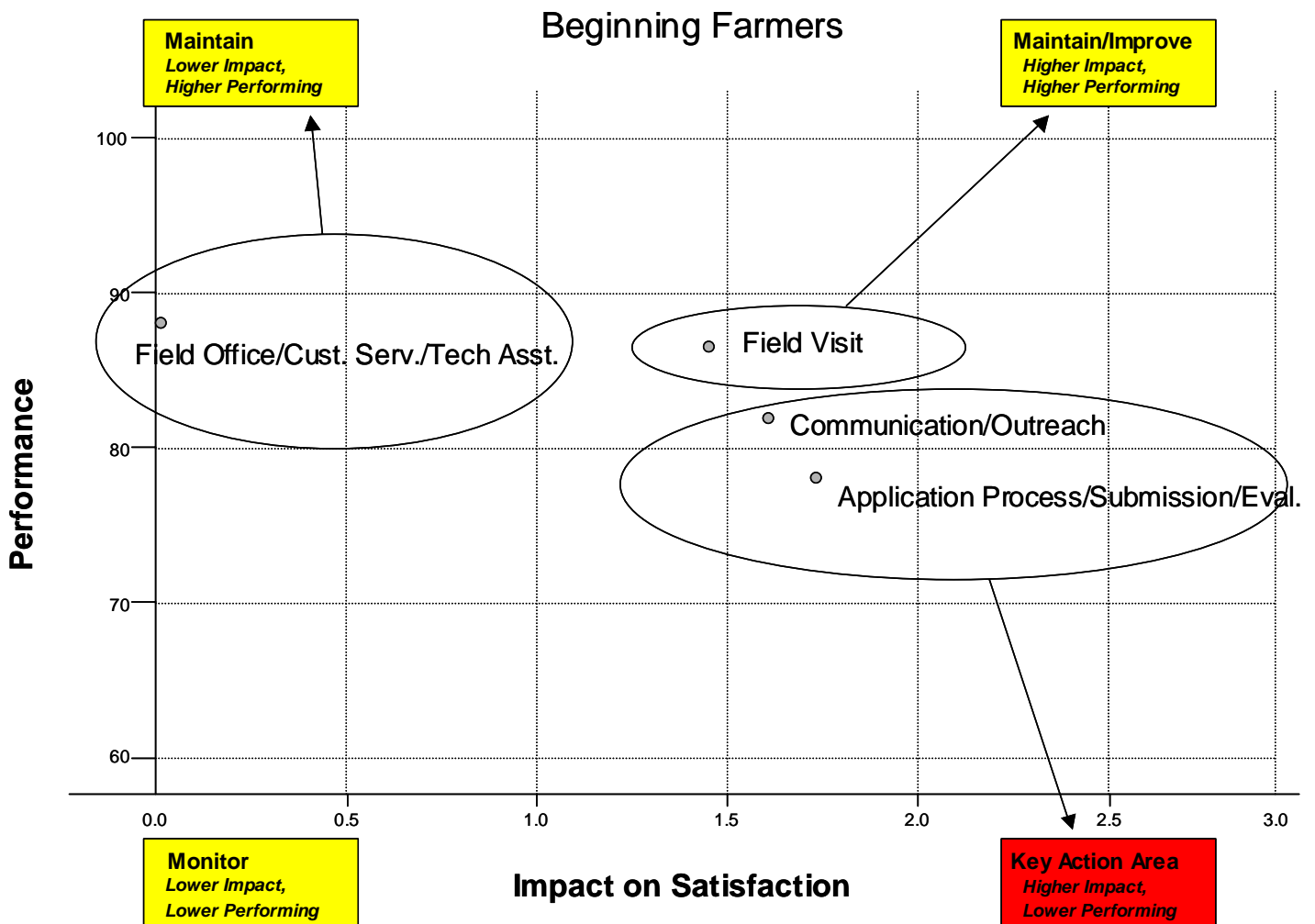
Likelihood to Return to NRCS in Future	88
Likelihood to Recommend NRCS	91
Confidence in NRCS	84

Recommendations

It is recommended to focus on the higher impact and lower performing areas as the highest priority. The areas of communication/outreach and applications process/submission/evaluation are the key action areas, which have high impacts and relative to other areas, are lower performing. The application process for Beginning Farmers should be a high priority area. Improvement should target providing clearer program eligibility information, improving the application submission process and giving quicker responses to Beginning Farmers from NRCS. With respect to communications/outreach, the focus should be on providing Beginning Farmers with information that is easier to understand.

Field Visits have relatively high impact on customer satisfaction for Beginning Farmers, but this is also a high performing area. Maintaining performance rather than targeting for improvement should be the course of action for the area of field visits.

Field Office/Customer Service/Technical Assistance has a very low impact on satisfaction and is a high performing area, maintain the current level of performance rather than target this area for improvement at this time.



Demographics – Beginning Farmers

The tables on the follow two pages provide demographic information for the Beginning Farmer respondents.

Age	
Under 45	43%
45-54	22%
55-64	23%
65 and over	11%
Refused	1%
Number of Respondents	
250	
Race*	
White	89%
Black or African American	4%
American Indian or Alaska Native	3%
Asian	2%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	1%
Other race	4%
Don't Know	0%
Refused	0%
Number of Respondents	
250	
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin	
Yes	6%
No	94%
Don't Know	0%
Refused	0%
Number of Respondents	
250	
Full-time or part-time farmer	
Full-time	44%
Part-time	54%
Refused	3%
Number of Respondents	
250	
Farming as an individual/family farm or as a member of a business entity	
Individual/Family Farm	89%
Member of Business Entity	8%
Both Individual/Family and Member of Business Entity	3%
Don't Know	0%
Refused	0%
Number of Respondents	
250	

Demographics – Beginning Farmers (cont.)

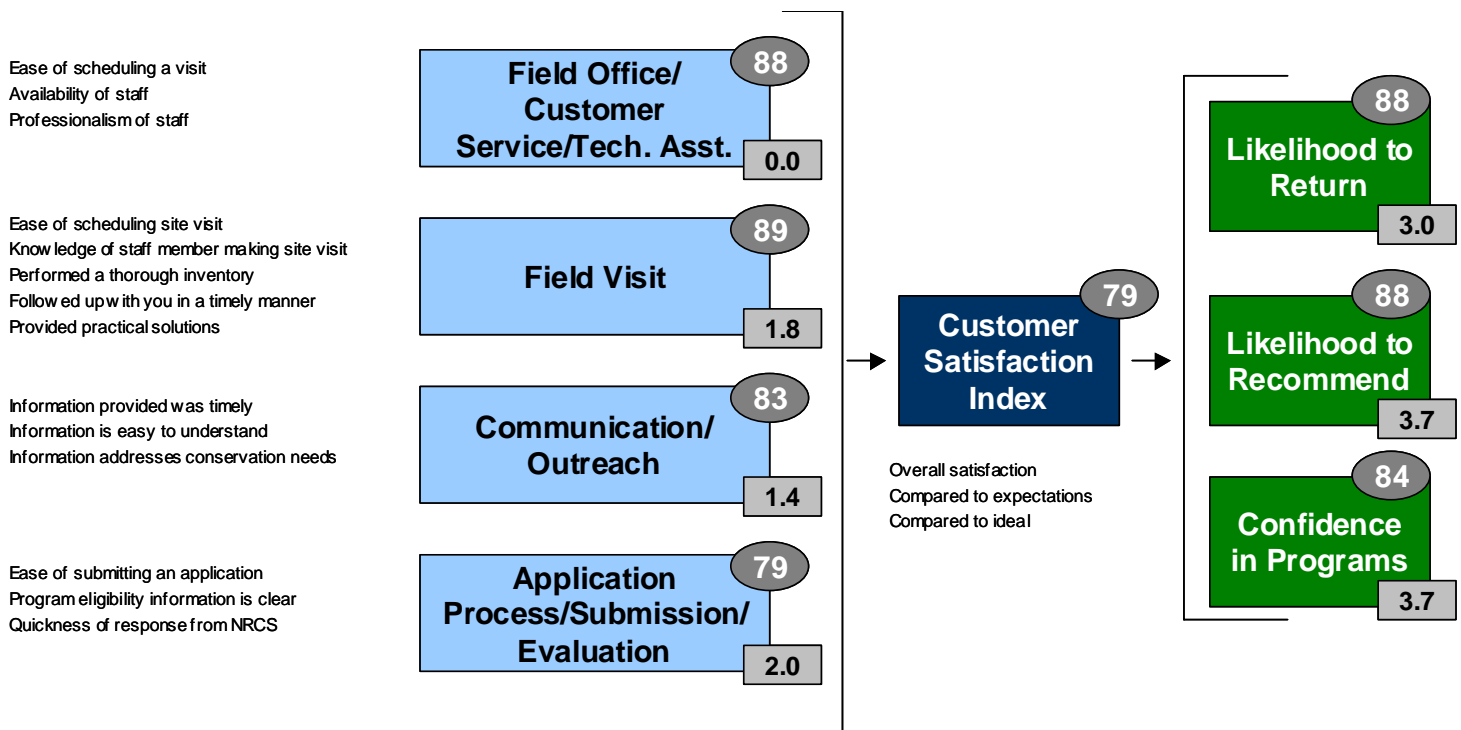
Total annual income in 2007 before taxes	
Less than \$10,000	10%
Between \$10,000 and \$24,999	6%
Between \$25,000 and \$49,999	17%
Between \$50,000 and \$74,999	18%
Between \$75,000 and \$99,999	8%
Between \$100,000 and \$249,999	16%
\$250,000 or more	7%
Don't Know	8%
Refused	9%
Number of Respondents	250
Total annual gross FARM sales in 2007	
Less than \$10,000	42%
Between \$10,000 and \$24,999	10%
Between \$25,000 and \$99,999	15%
Between \$100,000 and \$249,999	9%
\$250,000 or more	8%
Don't Know	8%
Refused	7%
Number of Respondents	250
Highest level of education completed	
Less than high school graduate	0%
High school graduate	14%
Some college	23%
Trade/technical/vocational training	8%
College graduate	37%
Post-graduate work/Degree	18%
Number of Respondents	250
Gender	
Male	71%
Female	29%
Number of Respondents	250

HISTORICALLY UNDERSERVED FARMERS

This page intentionally left blank.

Results: Historically Underserved Farmers

USDA NRCS Historically Underserved Customer Satisfaction Model



The 90% confidence interval for the Customer Satisfaction Index is +/- 2.1 points.

The above figure shows the customer satisfaction model for Historically Underserved Farmers. The four boxes on the left hand side of the model (Field Office/Customer Service/Tech. Asst., Field Visit, Communication/Outreach, Application Process/Submission/Evaluation) represent drivers of satisfaction. The performance in each of these areas is shown by the scores in the oval, which are on a 0 to 100 scale, where 0 means poor and 100 means excellent. These scores are derived from the weighted average of the ratings from a grouping of questions about each area. The specific items for each driver are shown on the far left of the figure. Detailed scores for each of these areas are provided in this report. Generally, scores in the 80s and 90s indicate a strong level of performance.

These satisfaction drivers have a relationship to satisfaction or impact, the values of which are shown in the rectangles. These impact scores are derived from a regression model using data from customer responses. Impacts represent the expected change in the customer satisfaction index given a five-point improvement in a driver area. For example, if the area of Communication/Outreach were to improve by five points from 83 to 88, the customer satisfaction index would increase by the value of its impact – 1.4 points to 80.4 as a result. As with scores, impacts are also relative to one another. A low impact or zero impact does not mean a component is unimportant. Rather, it means that a five-point change in that one component is unlikely to result in much improvement in Satisfaction at this time. Therefore, components with higher impacts are generally recommended for improvement first, especially if scores are lower for those components.

The right hand side of the model shows outcome behaviors such as likelihood to return, likelihood to recommend and confidence in programs from NRCS. These behaviors are driven by satisfaction and the impact satisfaction has on the behaviors is shown with their impact scores. There are two sets of numbers shown for the outcomes, the scores (on a 0 to 100 scale), which show the likelihood, or confidence that the respondent has. These are not percentages but rather are averages. The impacts

shown reflect the impact that a five-point improvement in satisfaction would have on the behavior. Thus, a five-point improvement in satisfaction would increase the likelihood to return by 3.0 points to 91.0.

Customer Satisfaction

The **Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI)** is a weighted average of three questions. The questions are answered on 1 to 10 scale and converted to a 0 to 100 scale for reporting purposes. The three questions measure: Overall satisfaction, Satisfaction compared to expectations, and Satisfaction compared to an “ideal” organization. The model assigns the weights to each question in a way that maximizes the ability of the index to predict changes in agency satisfaction.

The 2008 Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI) for Historically Underserved Farmers is 79 on a scale of 0 to 100. This score indicates a high level of satisfaction and is 11 points above the federal government average (68).

Customer Satisfaction	79
Overall satisfaction	85
Compared to expectations	75
Compared to ideal	76

Drivers of Customer Satisfaction

Field Office/Customer Service/Technical Assistance

Impact on Satisfaction 0.0

Most of the Historically Underserved Farmer respondents (91%) contacted NRCS to directly request assistance with concerns on their property and in most of those cases (92%) they have visited an NRCS field office. Just over one-third of Historically Underserved Farmers (36%) have walked-in, while well over half (57%) have scheduled a visit.

Contacted NRCS directly to request assistance with concerns on your property	
Yes	91%
No	8%
Don't Know	0%
Number of Respondents	
250	
Visited an NRCS field office	
Yes	92%
No	7%
Don't Know	1%
Number of Respondents	
228	
Scheduled visit or walked-in	
Scheduled visit	57%
Walked-in	36%
Don't Know	7%
Number of Respondents	
209	

For Historically Underserved Farmers Field Office/Customer Service/Technical Assistance had an impact of 0.0 on customer satisfaction. This does not mean that this area is unimportant to them, but rather than an increase in performance will not drive satisfaction. Historically Underserved Farmers rated this as a high performing area with a performance score of 88. Ease of scheduling visit rated highest (92), while professionalism of staff scored 90. Availability of staff, while scoring lower than the other two items in this area (86) still rated highly enough to indicate availability was not an issue for Historically Underserved Farmers. Given the impact of zero in this area, NRCS should not use resources to improve this area, but rather maintain the current level of performance.

Field Office/Customer Service/Technical Assistance	88
Ease of scheduling a visit	92
Availability of staff	86
Professionalism of staff	90

Field Visit

Impact on Satisfaction 1.8

Eighty-seven percent of Beginning Farmer respondents received a visit from NRCS to look at their farm or land. Usually (87%) the same person from the field office also visited their farm or home.

Received a visit from NRCS to look at your farm or land	
Yes	87%
No	12%
Don't Know	2%
Number of Respondents	250
Same person from NRCS field office also visited your farm or home	
Yes	87%
No	7%
Did not visit the field office	4%
Don't Know	2%
Number of Respondents	217

The Field Visit has a very high impact on satisfaction for Historically Underserved Farmers with an impact value of 1.8. The area of Field Visit also rates very high with Historically Underserved Farmers with a score of 89. The site visits are easy to schedule (90). The staff members were found to be knowledgeable and respondents thought they performed a thorough inventory of needs and opportunities on the customers' property – both scored 90. Follow up was in a timely manner (90) and the solutions that were provided were found to be practical (87).

Field Visit	89
Ease of scheduling site visit	90
Knowledge of staff member making site visit	90
Performed a through inventory of your needs and opportunities on your property	90
Followed up with you in a timely manner	90
Provided practical solutions	87

Communication/Outreach

Impact on Satisfaction 1.4

Thirty percent of Historically Underserved Farmers mention Technical Assistance/Information as the most helpful type of assistance /information. Financial Assistance/Information was mentioned by nearly as many (28%) as being the most helpful type of assistance and 26% mentioned Education Information.

As for the reasons Beginning Farmers thought farmers in the community have chosen not to work with NRCS, distrust of government was mentioned by 19% of respondents. Other responses accounted for 76% of responses. Verbatim comments are included in the Appendix D.

Most helpful types of assistance/information	
Technical Assistance/information	30%
Financial Assistance/information	28%
Information/education information	26%
Other	17%
Number of Respondents	
250	
Reasons why farmers in community have chosen not to work with NRCS*	
Did not qualify for NRCS Programs	5%
Do not understand NRCS Programs	6%
Past mistreatment/discrimination	3%
Conservation practices are too costly	4%
Distrust of Government/Do not want to work with Government	19%
Lacked funds to pay for upfront costs before reimbursement	6%
Other	76%
Number of Respondents	
250	

For Historically Underserved Farmers, direct mail was the preferred method of receiving information with 63 % selecting that choice. Nearly one-quarter (23%) of Historically Underserved Farmers mentioned e-mail as preferred method and 16% preferred in-person and 12% mentioned newspaper. *Multiple answers were allowed so answers may not add to 100%.

Preferred method of receiving information*	
In-person	16%
Newspaper	12%
Fact Sheets	1%
Brochures	5%
Farm Magazines	2%
Direct Mail	63%
NRCS website	3%
Non Profit website	1%
Conservation District	0%
Email	23%
DVDs	0%
Computer online course	0%
Local meetings	1%
Demonstrations from a working farm	0%
Friends or neighbors	1%
Family	0%
Other	23%
Number of Respondents	
250	

Communications and outreach had a strong impact on satisfaction with an impact value of 1.4. Historically Underserved Farmers gave the communications/outreach highest scores for addressing their conservation needs (85) and for its timeliness (84). Information being easy to understand was rated the lowest with a score of 80. Providing easier to understand communications and outreach to Historically Underserved Farmers may be an opportunity to improve customer satisfaction.

Communication/Outreach	83
Information provided was timely	84
Information is easy to understand	80
Information provided addresses my conservation needs	85

Application Process/Submission/Evaluation

Impact on Satisfaction 2.0

Eighty-four percent of Historically Underserved Farmer respondents had applied for NRCS programs for cost share assistance.

Applied for any NRCS programs for cost share assistance	
Yes	84%
No	13%
Don't Know	3%
Number of Respondents	250

The application process/submission/evaluation had a very high impact on satisfaction for Historically Underserved Farmers with an impact value of 2.0. Application process/submission/evaluation among Underserved Farmers should be a key action area for NRCS. This was the lowest rated area by Historically Underserved Farmers and had the highest impact on satisfaction. In particular, providing clear information about program eligibility (77) is an area to target. Ease of submitting application and quickness of response from NRCS each rated 80.

Application Process/Submission/Evaluation	79
Ease of submitting an application	80
Program eligibility information is clear	77
Quickness of the response received from NRCS	80

Outcomes

Three outcomes were measured for NRCS. The outcome scores indicate a likelihood rating on a 0 to 100 scale and not a percentage. Historically Underserved Farmers were likely to return to NRCS in the future with a score of 88. They were just as likely to recommend NRCS (88) and had a relatively high degree of confidence in NRCS (84).

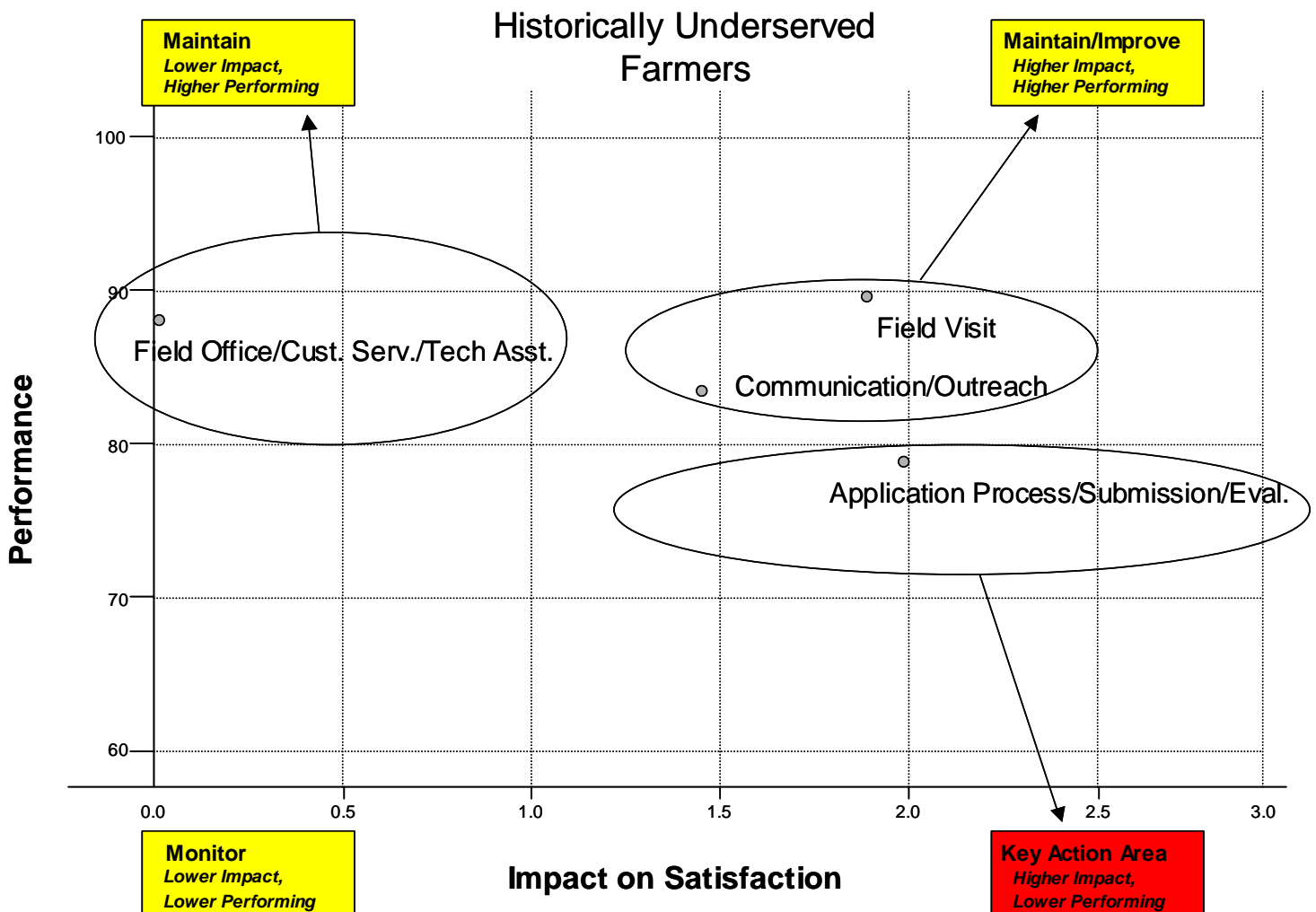
Likelihood to Return to NRCS in Future	88
Likelihood to Recommend NRCS	88
Confidence in NRCS	84

Recommendations

It is recommended to focus on the higher impact and lower performing areas as the highest priority. The areas of communication/outreach and applications process/submission/evaluation are the key action areas, which have high impacts and relative to other areas, are lower performing. The application process for Historically Underserved Farmers should be a high priority area. Improvement should target providing clearer program eligibility information, as well as improving the application submission process and giving quicker responses to Historically Underserved from NRCS.

Communications/outreach and field visits are higher performing, higher impact areas. Improvements in these areas will drive up satisfaction. However, given the higher level of performance, maintaining the current level of performance may be a more realistic recommendation.

Field Office/Customer Service/Technical Assistance has a very low impact on satisfaction and is a high performing area, maintain the current level of performance rather than target this area for improvement at this time.



Demographics – Historically Underserved Farmers

The tables on the follow two pages provide demographic information for the Historically Underserved Farmer respondents.

Age		
Under 45		14%
45-54		26%
55-64		30%
65 and over		29%
Refused		1%
Number of Respondents		250
Race*		
White		77%
Black or African American		7%
American Indian or Alaska Native		10%
Asian		2%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander		2%
Other race		3%
Don't Know		0%
Refused		1%
Number of Respondents		250
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin		
Yes		5%
No		95%
Don't Know		0%
Refused		0%
Number of Respondents		250
Full-time or part-time farmer		
Full-time		62%
Part-time		33%
Refused		6%
Number of Respondents		250
Farming as an individual/family farm or as a member of a business entity		
Individual/Family Farm		82%
Member of Business Entity		8%
Both Individual/Family and Member of Business Entity		7%
Don't Know		2%
Refused		1%
Number of Respondents		250

Demographics – Historically Underserved Farmers

Total annual income in 2007 before taxes	
Less than \$10,000	11%
Between \$10,000 and \$24,999	12%
Between \$25,000 and \$49,999	18%
Between \$50,000 and \$74,999	14%
Between \$75,000 and \$99,999	14%
Between \$100,000 and \$249,999	12%
\$250,000 or more	7%
Don't Know	5%
Refused	6%
Number of Respondents	
250	
Total annual gross FARM sales in 2007	
Less than \$10,000	25%
Between \$10,000 and \$24,999	13%
Between \$25,000 and \$99,999	26%
Between \$1000,000 and \$249,999	13%
\$250,000 or more	11%
Don't Know	7%
Refused	5%
Number of Respondents	
250	
Highest level of education completed	
Less than high school graduate	3%
High school graduate	21%
Some college	21%
Trade/technical/vocational training	4%
College graduate	33%
Post-graduate work/Degree	18%
Number of Respondents	
250	
Gender	
Male	43%
Female	57%
Number of Respondents	
250	

APPENDIX A: SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

This page intentionally left blank.

USDA NRCS - Customers Customer Satisfaction Survey FINAL VERSION

Verify Respondent

Intro1. Hello. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has hired my company, [Data Collection Company], to call on their behalf to conduct a brief survey about the services they provide. My name is _____. May I please speak with _____?

WAIT FOR RESPONSE

1. Correct Person on Phone (**GO TO INTRO**)
2. Not correct person, but Person is available (**HOLD UNTIL RESPONDENT ANSWERS AND READ BELOW**)

Intro2. Hello. The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has hired my company, [Data Collection Company], to call on their behalf. My name is _____. (**GO TO INTRO**)

1. If Person not available (**Schedule a call back**)
2. If No Such Person **“Thank you and have a nice day!”**
3. Refusal/Hung Up

Introduction

NOTE: The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides technical and financial assistance to individuals, groups, and communities to make natural resource management decisions on private, tribal, and other non-federal lands that address, promote, and improve natural resources.

We ask on behalf of the NRCS for your participation in a short survey that asks about your satisfaction with the assistance and services it provides.

This survey will take approximately 15 minutes of your time. This survey is authorized by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget Control No. 1505-0191.

(NOTE TO INTERVIEWER: IF THE RESPONDENT HAS ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT THE SURVEY PLEASE RECORD THE NATURE OF THEIR QUESTION AND HAVE THEM CONTACT MAGGIE RHODES (202-690-2264 or maggie.rhodes@wdc.usda.gov))

Intro3. Just to confirm, have you received assistance from the Natural Resources Conservation Service in the past two years?

1. Yes (Continue)
2. No (Terminate)
3. Don't Know (Terminate)

Intro4. Is now a good time?

1. Yes (Continue)
2. No “Can we schedule a time that is more convenient for you?”

(For all questions, please include choices 98 = Don't Know and 99 = Refused/Hung Up)

Field Office/Customer Service/Technical Assistance

Q1. Did you contact the Natural Resources Conservation Service directly to request assistance with concerns on your property?

1. Yes (Continue to Q2)
2. No (SKIP TO Q7)
3. Don't Know (SKIP TO Q7)

Q2. Did you visit an NRCS field office?

1. Yes (Continue to Q3)
2. No (Skip to Q7)
3. Don't Know (Skip to Q7)

Q3. Did you schedule your visit or walk-in?

1. Scheduled visit (Continue to Q4)
2. Walked-in (Read intro before Q4 and skip to Q5)
3. Don't know (Read intro before Q4 and skip to Q5)

Now think about your visit to the NRCS field office to get information about NRCS assistance and programs, on a scale from 1 to 10, where "1" is "Poor" and "10" is "Excellent" please rate the field office on the following:

Q4. Ease of scheduling a visit

Q5. Availability of staff

Q6. Professionalism of staff

Field Visit

Q7. Have you received a visit from NRCS to look at your farm or land?

1. Yes (Continue to Q8)
2. No (SKIP TO Q14)
3. Don't Know (SKIP TO Q14)

Q8. Did the same person from NRCS that you saw in the field office also visit your farm or home?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Did not visit the field office
4. Don't Know

Please think about the field visits and consultations you have received from NRCS. On a scale from "1" to "10," where "1" is "poor" and "10" is "excellent," please rate the field visits and consultations on the following:

- Q9. Ease of scheduling site visit
- Q10. Knowledge of staff member making site visit
- Q11. Performed a thorough inventory of your needs and opportunities on your property
- Q12. Followed up with you in a timely manner
- Q13. Provided practical solutions

Communication/Outreach

- Q14. How did you hear about the USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service assistance and programs? *(NOTE TO INTERVIEWER: Do not read answer choices. Capture verbatim comments and code answer)*
 - 1. Another Government agency
 - 2. Non-government organization (NGO)
 - 3. Workshop/Information session
 - 4. Direct visit from staff
 - 5. From USDA or NRCS website
 - 6. Family member
 - 7. Community leader
 - 8. Friend
 - 9. Other
- Q15. How do you prefer to receive information? *(NOTE TO INTERVIEWER: Do not read answer choices. Capture verbatim comments and code answer)*
 - 1. In-person
 - 2. Newspaper
 - 3. Fact Sheets
 - 4. Brochures
 - 5. Farm Magazines
 - 6. Direct Mail
 - 7. NRCS website
 - 8. Non Profit website
 - 9. Conservation District
 - 10. Email
 - 11. DVDs
 - 12. Computer online course
 - 13. Local meetings
 - 14. Demonstrations from a working farm
 - 15. Friends or neighbors
 - 16. Family

17. Other

Q16. Where do farmers in your community go to receive information on agriculture? *(NOTE TO INTERVIEWER: Do not read answer choices. Capture verbatim comments and code answer)*

1. Non-profit organizations
2. Universities
3. Family members
4. Soil and water conservation districts
5. Certified crop advisers
6. TSPs (Technical Service Providers)
7. Local agribusiness (e.g. grain dealers, chemical, machinery, etc.)
8. Extension service
9. Community leader
10. NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service)
11. Local cooperative
12. Internet
13. Other

Q17. What assistance/information is most helpful to you?

1. Technical Assistance/information
2. Financial Assistance/information
3. Information/education information (fact sheets, brochures, etc.)
4. Other (Specify)

Q18. What are some of the reasons why farmers in your community have chosen not to work with NRCS? *(NOTE TO INTERVIEWER: Do not read answer choices. Capture verbatim comments and code answer)*

1. Did not qualify for NRCS Programs
2. Do not understand NRCS Programs
3. Past mistreatment/discrimination
4. Conservation practices are too costly
5. Distrust of Government/Do not want to work with Government
6. Lacked funds to pay for upfront costs before reimbursement
7. Other

Think about the communication efforts with respect to the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Use a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means "Poor" and 10 means "Excellent" to rate the following:

- Q19. Information provided was timely
- Q20. Information is easy to understand
- Q21. Information provided addresses my conservation needs
- Q22. What thing(s) can NRCS do to let more producers know about the programs and assistance it provides?

Application Process/ Submission/Evaluation

- Q23. Did you apply for any NRCS programs for cost share assistance? (If not skip to question website)
- 1. Yes (Continue to Q24)
 - 2. No (Skip to Q28)
 - 3. Don't Know (Skip to Q28)

Please think about the application submission process for the NRCS Programs. On a scale from "1" to "10," where "1" is "poor" and "10" is "excellent," please rate the following. If a question does not apply, please answer "does not apply":

- Q24. Ease of submitting an application
- Q25. Program eligibility information is clear
- Q26. Please rate the quickness of the response you received from NRCS. Use a scale from "1" to "10" where "1" means "not very timely" and "10" means "very timely."
- Q27. What suggestions do you have for improving the application process?

ACSI Benchmark Questions

Now we are going to ask you to please consider your experiences with the assistance you have received from USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in answering the following.

- Q28. First, please consider all your experiences to date in getting assistance from NRCS. Using a 10-point scale on which "1" means "Very dissatisfied" and "10" means "Very satisfied," how satisfied are you with the assistance that you have received from NRCS?
- Q29. To what extent has the assistance you have received from NRCS fallen short of your expectations or exceeded your expectations? Please use a 10-point scale on which "1" now means "Falls short of your expectations" and "10" means "Exceeds your expectations."
- Q30. Forget about the assistance that you have received from NRCS a moment. Now, imagine what an ideal provider of this type of assistance may be like.

How well do you think assistance from NRCS compares with that ideal? Please use a 10-point scale on which "1" means "Not very close to the ideal" and "10" means "Very close to the ideal."

 Outcomes

- Q31. If NRCS did not exist, where would you go to get this type of assistance? *(NOTE TO INTERVIEWER: Do not read answer choices. Capture verbatim comments and code answer)*
1. State Agencies/State Department of Agriculture
 2. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)
 3. Consultants
 4. Community Based Organizations (CBOs)
 5. University
 6. Cooperative Extension
 7. Other
- Q32. How likely are you to return to NRCS for assistance in the future? Please use a scale from 1 to 10, where "1" means "not very likely" and "10" means "very likely."
- Q33. How likely would you be to recommend the USDA NRCS programs and services to others? Please use a scale from 1 to 10, where "1" means "not very likely" and "10" means "very likely."
- Q34. How confident are you in the assistance and solutions provided by NRCS programs and services resulting in the effective management of your land? Please use a scale from 1 to 10, where "1" means "not very confident" and "10" means "very confident."

 Open-Ends

- Q35. How could NRCS provide assistance, information and/or services to better meet your needs?
- Q36. How do you expect the new Farm Bill to impact you and your farming operations?

 Demographics

Now, I have a few questions that will help us in grouping your responses with other producers that are similar to you.

QD1. What is your age, please?

[RECORD NUMBER OF YEARS]

Don't Know

REFUSED

QD2. Do you consider your race(s) as? (Comment-QD2 and QD3 should be switch per Census and OPM list the other way.)

1. White
2. Black or African American
3. American Indian or Alaska Native
4. Asian
5. Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
6. Other race
7. Don't Know
8. REFUSED

QD3. Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't Know
4. REFUSED

QD4. Are you a full-time or part-time farmer?

1. Full-time
2. Part-time
3. Refused

QD5. Are you farming as an individual or as a family farm, or are you farming as a member of a business entity? (Interview Read: A Business entity would include corporations, partnerships, estates, trusts, and other types of businesses.)

1. Individual/Family Farm
2. Member of Business Entity
3. Both Individual/Family and Member of Business Entity
98. Don't Know
99. Refused

(Family farm: A family farm is defined as a farm not operated by a hired manager and that is organized as a sole or family proprietorship.)

QD6. What was your total annual income in 2007 before taxes? (*READ CODES 1-7 AS NECESSARY*) (Recommendation asking for farm income and widening the ranges)

1. Less than \$10,000
2. Between \$10,000 and \$24,999
3. Between \$25,000 and \$49,999
4. Between \$50,000 and \$74,999
5. Between \$75,000 and \$99,999
6. Between \$100,000 and \$249,999
7. \$250,000 or more
8. Don't Know
9. Refused

QD7. What was your total annual gross FARM sales in 2007? (*READ CODES 1-7 AS NECESSARY*)

1. Less than \$10,000
2. Between \$10,000 and \$24,999
3. Between \$25,000 and \$99,999
4. Between \$100,000 and \$249,999
5. \$250,000 or more
6. Don't Know
7. Refused

QD8. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

1. Less than high school graduate
2. High school graduate
3. Some college
4. Trade/technical/vocational training
5. College graduate
6. Post-graduate work/Degree

QD9. Gender (By Observation)

1. Male
2. Female

Closing

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) would like to thank you for your time and participation today. Your feedback is greatly appreciated.

APPENDIX B: RESULTS TABLES

This page intentionally left blank.

Aggregate Scores and Impacts

	Score	Impact
Field Office/Customer Service/Technical Assistance	89	0.1
Ease of scheduling a visit	91	
Availability of staff	87	
Professionalism of staff	91	
Field Visit	88	2.0
Ease of scheduling site visit	90	
Knowledge of staff member making site visit	90	
Performed a thorough inventory of your needs and opportunities on your property	88	
Followed up with you in a timely manner	88	
Provided practical solutions	86	
Communication/Outreach	82	1.5
Information provided was timely	84	
Information is easy to understand	79	
Information provided addresses my conservation needs	83	
Application Process/Submission/Evaluation	80	1.5
Ease of submitting an application	81	
Program eligibility information is clear	79	
Quickness of the response received from NRCS	80	
Customer Satisfaction	80	--
Overall satisfaction	86	
Compared to expectations	76	
Compared to ideal	76	
Likelihood to Return to NRCS in Future	88	3.1
Likelihood to return to NRCS for assistance in the future	88	
Likelihood to Recommend NRCS	90	3.5
Likelihood to recommend NRCS programs and services to others	90	
Confidence in NRCS	84	3.7
Confidence in NRCS programs and services	84	
Sample Size	1237	

Aggregate Scores by Age Groups

	Under 45	45-54	55-64	65 and over
Field Office/Customer Service/Technical Assistance	87	89	90	92
Ease of scheduling a visit	87	91	93	92
Availability of staff	85	86	87	90
Professionalism of staff	90	90	92	93
Field Visit	86	87	90	91
Ease of scheduling site visit	88	89	91	92
Knowledge of staff member making site visit	87	89	90	93
Performed a thorough inventory of your needs and opportunities on your property	86	87	90	92
Followed up with you in a timely manner	84	86	90	92
Provided practical solutions	84	84	87	89
Communication/Outreach	79	82	83	85
Information provided was timely	81	83	85	88
Information is easy to understand	75	78	79	83
Information provided addresses my conservation needs	81	83	84	85
Application Process/Submission/Evaluation	76	79	81	83
Ease of submitting an application	79	81	81	82
Program eligibility information is clear	76	77	80	84
Quickness of the response received from NRCS	75	79	82	83
Customer Satisfaction	76	78	81	83
Overall satisfaction	83	84	87	90
Compared to expectations	73	75	77	79
Compared to ideal	72	74	77	79
Likelihood to Return to NRCS in Future	87	88	89	87
Likelihood to return to NRCS for assistance in the future	87	88	89	87
Likelihood to Recommend NRCS	88	88	92	92
Likelihood to recommend NRCS programs and services to others	88	88	92	92
Confidence in NRCS	82	83	85	87
Confidence in NRCS programs and services	82	83	85	87
Sample Size	277	330	362	254

Aggregate Scores by Full-time or Part-time Status

	Full-time	Part-time	Significant Difference
Field Office/Customer Service/Technical Assistance	89	90	
Ease of scheduling a visit	91	91	
Availability of staff	86	87	
Professionalism of staff	91	92	
Field Visit	88	89	
Ease of scheduling site visit	90	90	
Knowledge of staff member making site visit	89	91	✓
Performed a thorough inventory of your needs and opportunities on your property	88	89	
Followed up with you in a timely manner	88	89	
Provided practical solutions	85	87	✓
Communication/Outreach	81	83	✓
Information provided was timely	84	84	
Information is easy to understand	78	80	✓
Information provided addresses my conservation needs	82	85	✓
Application Process/Submission/Evaluation	79	80	
Ease of submitting an application	80	81	
Program eligibility information is clear	78	80	
Quickness of the response received from NRCS	78	81	✓
Customer Satisfaction	78	82	✓
Overall satisfaction	85	87	✓
Compared to expectations	74	78	✓
Compared to ideal	74	78	✓
Likelihood to Return to NRCS in Future	88	88	
Likelihood to return to NRCS for assistance in the future	88	88	
Likelihood to Recommend NRCS	89	91	✓
Likelihood to recommend NRCS programs and services to others	89	91	✓
Confidence in NRCS	83	86	✓
Confidence in NRCS programs and services	83	86	✓
Sample Size	654	544	

Aggregate Scores by Business Entity or Family Farm Status

	Individual/ Family Farm	Member of Business Entity	Both
Field Office/Customer Service/Technical Assistance	90	86	91
Ease of scheduling a visit	91	87	92
Availability of staff	87	82	89
Professionalism of staff	92	88	93
Field Visit	89	83	89
Ease of scheduling site visit	90	84	92
Knowledge of staff member making site visit	90	85	91
Performed a thorough inventory of your needs and opportunities on your property	89	82	89
Followed up with you in a timely manner	89	82	90
Provided practical solutions	87	80	83
Communication/Outreach	83	76	82
Information provided was timely	85	78	84
Information is easy to understand	80	72	79
Information provided addresses my conservation needs	84	76	82
Application Process/Submission/Evaluation	81	70	78
Ease of submitting an application	82	72	78
Program eligibility information is clear	80	70	75
Quickness of the response received from NRCS	81	69	80
Customer Satisfaction	80	75	78
Overall satisfaction	86	81	85
Compared to expectations	76	72	73
Compared to ideal	76	70	74
Likelihood to Return to NRCS in Future	88	86	87
Likelihood to return to NRCS for assistance in the future	88	86	87
Likelihood to Recommend NRCS	90	87	89
Likelihood to recommend NRCS programs and services to others	90	87	89
Confidence in NRCS	85	81	78
Confidence in NRCS programs and services	85	81	78
Sample Size	1064	97	60

Aggregate Scores by Income

	Less than \$10,000	Between \$10,000 and \$24,999	Between \$25,000 and \$49,999	Between \$50,000 and \$74,999	Between \$75,000 and \$99,999	Between \$100,000 and \$249,999	\$250,000 or more
Field Office/Customer Service/Technical Assistance	89	91	89	90	90	88	88
Ease of scheduling a visit	91	92	90	90	92	93	89
Availability of staff	87	89	86	87	88	86	85
Professionalism of staff	92	93	91	91	92	90	91
Field Visit	86	89	88	88	90	87	86
Ease of scheduling site visit	89	91	89	89	90	90	87
Knowledge of staff member making site visit	88	90	90	90	92	89	88
Performed a through inventory of your needs and opportunities on your property	86	89	88	88	92	87	86
Followed up with you in a timely manner	84	88	89	88	90	88	88
Provided practical solutions	82	87	87	85	88	85	83
Communication/Outreach	79	85	84	82	81	81	82
Information provided was timely	82	85	85	84	84	82	84
Information is easy to understand	75	84	80	79	76	78	79
Information provided addresses my conservation needs	80	86	85	83	84	81	81
Application Process/Submission/Evaluation	78	83	81	80	80	78	75
Ease of submitting an application	82	86	80	81	81	79	73
Program eligibility information is clear	75	82	81	79	79	77	77
Quickness of the response received from NRCS	79	82	81	80	79	78	74
Customer Satisfaction	76	83	81	79	80	79	77
Overall satisfaction	82	87	88	85	87	84	84
Compared to expectations	72	79	77	76	75	76	71
Compared to ideal	73	80	77	74	77	74	72
Likelihood to Return to NRCS in Future	87	90	91	87	86	87	87
Likelihood to return to NRCS for assistance in the future	87	90	91	87	86	87	87
Likelihood to Recommend NRCS	89	92	92	90	89	89	88
Likelihood to recommend NRCS programs and services to others	89	92	92	90	89	89	88
Confidence in NRCS	82	86	87	83	85	82	82
Confidence in NRCS programs and services	82	86	87	83	85	82	82
Sample Size	117	112	223	196	130	200	87

Aggregate Scores by Gross Sales

	Less than \$10,000	Between \$10,000 and \$24,999	Between \$25,000 and \$99,999	Between \$100,000 and \$249,999	\$250,000 or more
Field Office/Customer Service/Technical Assistance	90	87	91	91	86
Ease of scheduling a visit	90	88	94	93	87
Availability of staff	87	85	88	88	83
Professionalism of staff	93	89	92	91	89
Field Visit	88	86	90	87	85
Ease of scheduling site visit	89	88	92	90	86
Knowledge of staff member making site visit	90	88	91	88	86
Performed a thorough inventory of your needs and opportunities on your property	88	87	90	87	84
Followed up with you in a timely manner	87	86	91	87	85
Provided practical solutions	87	84	88	83	81
Communication/Outreach	83	82	84	81	77
Information provided was timely	84	83	86	84	79
Information is easy to understand	80	78	80	77	73
Information provided addresses my conservation needs	85	83	85	81	78
Application Process/Submission/Evaluation	81	80	80	77	72
Ease of submitting an application	82	81	80	79	73
Program eligibility information is clear	80	78	79	76	72
Quickness of the response received from NRCS	81	80	81	77	71
Customer Satisfaction	81	80	81	78	75
Overall satisfaction	86	85	87	86	81
Compared to expectations	77	77	77	75	70
Compared to ideal	77	77	76	72	70
Likelihood to Return to NRCS in Future	86	89	90	90	85
Likelihood to return to NRCS for assistance in the future	86	89	90	90	85
Likelihood to Recommend NRCS	90	91	92	88	87
Likelihood to recommend NRCS programs and services to others	90	91	92	88	87
Confidence in NRCS	86	85	86	78	80
Confidence in NRCS programs and services	86	85	86	78	80
Sample Size	382	181	245	129	135

Aggregate Scores by Education

	Less than high school graduate	High school graduate	Some college	Trade/ technical/ vocational training	College graduate	Post-graduate work/Degree
Field Office/Customer Service/Technical Assistance	89	91	90	88	89	89
Ease of scheduling a visit	88	92	91	90	90	93
Availability of staff	87	90	88	85	86	86
Professionalism of staff	92	92	93	89	90	91
Field Visit	87	91	90	86	87	88
Ease of scheduling site visit	88	93	90	88	88	89
Knowledge of staff member making site visit	89	91	91	88	89	89
Performed a thorough inventory of your needs and opportunities on your property	81	90	91	86	87	88
Followed up with you in a timely manner	87	91	90	86	87	88
Provided practical solutions	88	89	89	81	84	85
Communication/Outreach	81	85	83	83	81	81
Information provided was timely	84	86	86	84	83	82
Information is easy to understand	82	83	79	79	76	78
Information provided addresses my conservation needs	80	84	85	84	83	83
Application Process/Submission/Evaluation	80	84	83	80	77	77
Ease of submitting an application	87	86	83	83	78	77
Program eligibility information is clear	83	84	82	78	76	75
Quickness of the response received from NRCS	75	84	84	81	76	78
Customer Satisfaction	80	83	82	79	78	78
Overall satisfaction	85	89	88	82	84	85
Compared to expectations	77	80	78	77	73	74
Compared to ideal	76	80	79	77	73	72
Likelihood to Return to NRCS in Future	75	89	89	88	88	88
Likelihood to return to NRCS for assistance in the future	75	89	89	88	88	88
Likelihood to Recommend NRCS	82	92	92	89	89	90
Likelihood to recommend NRCS programs and services to others	82	92	92	89	89	90
Confidence in NRCS	82	88	85	83	82	84
Confidence in NRCS programs and services	82	88	85	83	82	84
Sample Size	28	229	254	69	412	245

Scores by Segment

	Part-Time Farmers	Socially Disadvantaged & Limited Resource Farmers	Specialty Crop Farmers	Beginning Farmers	Historically Underserved Farmers
Field Office/Customer Service/Technical Assistance	91	90	89	88	88
Ease of scheduling a visit	93	91	89	90	92
Availability of staff	89	88	86	85	86
Professionalism of staff	93	92	91	90	90
Field Visit	90	89	87	87	89
Ease of scheduling site visit	91	91	89	88	90
Knowledge of staff member making site visit	91	91	89	88	90
Performed a thorough inventory of your needs and opportunities on your property	91	88	87	86	90
Followed up with you in a timely manner	90	89	87	86	90
Provided practical solutions	88	86	84	85	87
Communication/Outreach	84	82	80	82	83
Information provided was timely	86	85	81	84	84
Information is easy to understand	80	79	77	78	80
Information provided addresses my conservation needs	86	82	81	84	85
Application Process/Submission/Evaluation	81	83	77	78	79
Ease of submitting an application	82	85	77	79	80
Program eligibility information is clear	80	83	76	77	77
Quickness of the response received from NRCS	82	80	79	78	80
Customer Satisfaction	83	80	78	79	79
Overall satisfaction	89	86	84	84	85
Compared to expectations	79	76	75	74	75
Compared to ideal	78	76	73	76	76
Likelihood to Return to NRCS in Future	91	87	85	88	88
Likelihood to return to NRCS for assistance in the future	91	87	85	88	88
Likelihood to Recommend NRCS	94	90	87	91	88
Likelihood to recommend NRCS programs and services to others	94	90	87	91	88
Confidence in NRCS	86	85	82	84	84
Confidence in NRCS programs and services	86	85	82	84	84
Sample Size	250	251	236	250	250

Part Time Farmers – Scores and Impacts

	Score	Impact
Field Office/Customer Service/Technical Assistance	91	0.3
Ease of scheduling a visit	93	
Availability of staff	89	
Professionalism of staff	93	
Field Visit	90	2.9
Ease of scheduling site visit	91	
Knowledge of staff member making site visit	91	
Performed a thorough inventory of your needs and opportunities on your property	91	
Followed up with you in a timely manner	90	
Provided practical solutions	88	
Communication/Outreach	84	1.5
Information provided was timely	86	
Information is easy to understand	80	
Information provided addresses my conservation needs	86	
Application Process/Submission/Evaluation	81	0.6
Ease of submitting an application	82	
Program eligibility information is clear	80	
Quickness of the response received from NRCS	82	
Customer Satisfaction	83	--
Overall satisfaction	89	
Compared to expectations	79	
Compared to ideal	78	
Likelihood to Return to NRCS in Future	91	2.7
Likelihood to return to NRCS for assistance in the future	91	
Likelihood to Recommend NRCS	94	2.5
Likelihood to recommend NRCS programs and services to others	94	
Confidence in NRCS	86	3.5
Confidence in NRCS programs and services	86	
Sample Size	250	

Socially Disadvantaged and Limited Resource Farmers – Scores and Impacts

	Score	Impact
Field Office/Customer Service/Technical Assistance	90	0.9
Ease of scheduling a visit	91	
Availability of staff	88	
Professionalism of staff	92	
Field Visit	89	2.1
Ease of scheduling site visit	91	
Knowledge of staff member making site visit	91	
Performed a thorough inventory of your needs and opportunities on your property	88	
Followed up with you in a timely manner	89	
Provided practical solutions	86	
Communication/Outreach	82	1.2
Information provided was timely	85	
Information is easy to understand	79	
Information provided addresses my conservation needs	82	
Application Process/Submission/Evaluation	83	1.6
Ease of submitting an application	85	
Program eligibility information is clear	83	
Quickness of the response received from NRCS	80	
Customer Satisfaction	80	--
Overall satisfaction	86	
Compared to expectations	76	
Compared to ideal	76	
Likelihood to Return to NRCS in Future	87	2.9
Likelihood to return to NRCS for assistance in the future	87	
Likelihood to Recommend NRCS	90	3.4
Likelihood to recommend NRCS programs and services to others	90	
Confidence in NRCS	85	3.7
Confidence in NRCS programs and services	85	
Sample Size	251	

Specialty Crop Farmers – Scores and Impacts

	Score	Impact
Field Office/Customer Service/Technical Assistance	89	0.0
Ease of scheduling a visit	89	
Availability of staff	86	
Professionalism of staff	91	
Field Visit	87	1.9
Ease of scheduling site visit	89	
Knowledge of staff member making site visit	89	
Performed a thorough inventory of your needs and opportunities on your property	87	
Followed up with you in a timely manner	87	
Provided practical solutions	84	
Communication/Outreach	80	1.8
Information provided was timely	81	
Information is easy to understand	77	
Information provided addresses my conservation needs	81	
Application Process/Submission/Evaluation	77	1.4
Ease of submitting an application	77	
Program eligibility information is clear	76	
Quickness of the response received from NRCS	79	
Customer Satisfaction	78	--
Overall satisfaction	84	
Compared to expectations	75	
Compared to ideal	73	
Likelihood to Return to NRCS in Future	85	3.6
Likelihood to return to NRCS for assistance in the future	85	
Likelihood to Recommend NRCS	87	3.9
Likelihood to recommend NRCS programs and services to others	87	
Confidence in NRCS	82	3.7
Confidence in NRCS programs and services	82	
Sample Size	236	

Beginning Farmers – Scores and Impacts

	Score	Impact
Field Office/Customer Service/Technical Assistance	88	0.0
Ease of scheduling a visit	90	
Availability of staff	85	
Professionalism of staff	90	
Field Visit	87	1.4
Ease of scheduling site visit	88	
Knowledge of staff member making site visit	88	
Performed a through inventory of your needs and opportunities on your property	86	
Followed up with you in a timely manner	86	
Provided practical solutions	85	
Communication/Outreach	82	1.6
Information provided was timely	84	
Information is easy to understand	78	
Information provided addresses my conservation needs	84	
Application Process/Submission/Evaluation	78	1.7
Ease of submitting an application	79	
Program eligibility information is clear	77	
Quickness of the response received from NRCS	78	
Customer Satisfaction	79	--
Overall satisfaction	84	
Compared to expectations	74	
Compared to ideal	76	
Likelihood to Return to NRCS in Future	88	3.3
Likelihood to return to NRCS for assistance in the future	88	
Likelihood to Recommend NRCS	91	3.5
Likelihood to recommend NRCS programs and services to others	91	
Confidence in NRCS	84	3.6
Confidence in NRCS programs and services	84	
Sample Size	250	

Historically Underserved Farmers – Scores and Impacts

	Score	Impact
Field Office/Customer Service/Technical Assistance	88	0.0
Ease of scheduling a visit	92	
Availability of staff	86	
Professionalism of staff	90	
Field Visit	89	1.8
Ease of scheduling site visit	90	
Knowledge of staff member making site visit	90	
Performed a thorough inventory of your needs and opportunities on your property	90	
Followed up with you in a timely manner	90	
Provided practical solutions	87	
Communication/Outreach	83	1.4
Information provided was timely	84	
Information is easy to understand	80	
Information provided addresses my conservation needs	85	
Application Process/Submission/Evaluation	79	2.0
Ease of submitting an application	80	
Program eligibility information is clear	77	
Quickness of the response received from NRCS	80	
Customer Satisfaction	79	--
Overall satisfaction	85	
Compared to expectations	75	
Compared to ideal	76	
Likelihood to Return to NRCS in Future	88	3.0
Likelihood to return to NRCS for assistance in the future	88	
Likelihood to Recommend NRCS	88	3.7
Likelihood to recommend NRCS programs and services to others	88	
Confidence in NRCS	84	3.7
Confidence in NRCS programs and services	84	
Sample Size	250	