

stakeholder satisfaction research

2019: Report of Findings

Report for the IESO

July 2019



background

The IESO engages with a diverse set of stakeholders ranging from generators to local distribution companies to non-government organizations.

While diverse in nature, there is a need to understand and measure the performance of the customer/stakeholder initiatives and track those results over time. As such, the IESO commissioned Northstar as its research partner to engage with relevant customers/stakeholders and inform internal executives over the course of the contract on the success of its engagement activities.

To respond this need, Northstar designed a multi-phased, multi-modal approach, a combination of quantitative and qualitative engagements with IESO customers/stakeholders.

This quantitative research in 2019 sampled seven key customer groups - Generators, Distributors/Transmitters, Importers/Exporters, Large Consumers, Indigenous Communities, Emerging Technologies and a mixed sub-group of 'Other' Interested Stakeholders - to compare with the 2016, 2017, and 2018 findings. Indigenous communities and emerging technologies were new groups added in 2018.

The following results are based on phone interviews conducted between June 3 and July 5, 2019.



research objectives

More specifically, this 2019 research was designed to:

- Track a number of metrics (including three index scores) critical to the IESO organization including:
 - Satisfaction with the IESO;
 - Satisfaction with the IESO's engagement process;
 - Relevance of the IESO's engagement process;
 - Performance on each of the IESO's engagement process objectives;
 - IESO's communication channel awareness, use and effectiveness;
- Measure satisfaction as per the index based on the key drivers to satisfaction that can be tracked over time;



methodology

- Northstar employed a telephone methodology and conducted interviews with customers/stakeholders from June 3-July 5, 2019
 - The average interview length was under 20 minutes.
- All study participants were sourced from IESO customer lists, each of which had been in recent contact with the IESO.
 - We monitored field completion rates to ensure they were proportioned to sample, and structured to be representative of available records in the customer lists provided.
- Within the identified field period, we were able to achieve the following number of completes across the seven customer groups:

	TOTAL	Electricity Generators	Distributors/ Transmitters	Importers/ Exporters	Large Consumers	Indigenous Communities	Emerging Technologies	Other Interested Stakeholders
Total Completes	390	83	73	22	34	32	34	112
Total Usable Records	1094	192	179	83	74	93	120	353
Response Rate (# of Completes/Records)	36%	43%	41%	27%	46%	34%	28%	32%
+/- % shown = 95% confidence interval	4.96%	10.76%	11.47%	20.89%	16.81%	17.32%	16.81%	9.26%

 = findings that are statistically higher/lower (calculated at a 95% confidence level) compared to 2018.
 = findings that are directionally higher/lower (calculated at a 80-90% confidence level) compared to 2018.

 = findings that are statistically higher (calculated at a 95% confidence level) among stakeholder target groups vs. the total sample.
 = findings that are statistically lower (calculated at a 95% confidence level) among stakeholder target groups vs. the total sample.

*NOTE: Including completes and partially completes

executive summary

distillation of findings & implications for IESO



executive summary

Stakeholder Mood

- The IESO goodwill account (favourability and satisfaction) remains stable over the past four years. The slight downward trend seen from 2016 to 2018 has stabilized this year – a positive sign but there is still a need to monitor these metrics.
- With respect to corporate goals, the IESO is rated lower this year on 1) ensuring a reliable electricity future, 2) operating and shaping the system efficiently and transparently, 3) enabling innovation, 4) showing effective resource planning, and 5) operating the grid independently. This growth in negativism needs to be monitored.

Engagement Score

- Remaining stable over the past four years, seven-in-ten (71%) stakeholders say that their experience with the IESO's engagement process **is meeting their expectations**.
 - Distributors, generators and large consumers however, show an increased concern with more saying their experience has fallen below their expectations.
- While perceptions of the **IESO staff commitment** to engagement remains strong and unchanged (over 50% rate it 8-10), a gradual decline is seen since 2016 (61%).
- The IESO engagement process continues to be **relevant** to over two-thirds of stakeholders, holding steady with previous years.
- Overall **satisfaction** with the IESO engagement process sees a gradual increasing trend since 2017 going from 44% to 50% of stakeholders rating it 8-10.

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Engagement Process

- Across the range of communication channels available from the IESO, **the website** has the highest combined level of awareness and use. **Direct emails** follow the website closely for awareness and use but have the highest effectiveness.
- Webinars have gained in awareness from 2018 while working groups and stakeholder advisory committee receive relatively high awareness but lower levels of effectiveness, which further decreased this year.
- The IESO Electricity Summit was well received this year with gains are in awareness, participation, and effectiveness. Directional gains are also seen for the Regional Electricity Forum, however, effectiveness is still low. When properly executed, **these gatherings are proving a highly effective engagement tool.**
- Social media awareness and use remains relatively low while conversion to effectiveness continues to decrease this year.

Engagement Experience

- Seven-in-ten stakeholders believe that their experience with the IESO's engagement has met their expectations in 2019.
- Stabilizing from last year's increase, one-third of stakeholders continue to engage with the process in order to advance their own business needs, as opposed to **both** advance interests and learn from others. Generators and Importers/Exporters in particular are focused on their own needs.
- While 80% believe that engagement has led to effective change for stakeholders, this sentiment has been softening since 2016 (85%) especially among generators and large consumers.
- Three-quarters of stakeholders believe that engagement efforts have led to effective change in the electricity sector, declining from last year (81%).
- Less than half of stakeholders strongly believe that the IESO pays attention to the outcomes of its engagement efforts, aligning with 2018.

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Market Renewal

- Over 80% of stakeholders claim to be aware of the Market Renewal initiative, a significant increase from last year. The highest levels are seen among generators and importers/exporters.
- Over one-quarter actively participate in the Market Renewal working group, again increasing from 2018. Conversely, 51% monitor or do not pay attention to the initiative especially among distributors and emerging technologies
- The IESO receives high ratings for offering sufficient Market Renewal participation opportunities (86%). However, among those who participated, 60% say their expectations were met, a slight decline from 2018 (72%).
- In terms of satisfaction with the Market Renewal efforts, it remains steady with mediocre ratings of 59% rating it 4-7.
- Again on par with last year, four-in-ten stakeholders positively rate the IESO's Market Renewal effectiveness of input gathering. Further, just over one-quarter rate the IESO use of stakeholder input for decision-making at 8-10.
- By using a metric similar to the composite satisfaction score, Market Renewal receives an overall rating of 66, consistent with the overall composite satisfaction score (67).

Special Community Questions

- A series of additional questions were asked of indigenous communities. Results are as follows:
 - 78% of respondents have dealt with the IESO First Nations and Metis Group.
 - Nearly nine-in-ten are satisfied with their service experience.
- Email is the most common interactive channel used by the Indigenous Communities followed by in-person regional meetings.

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Implications for the Future

- There was less alignment among stakeholders this year on areas of improvement, though three areas become apparent:
 - Generators, Distributors, and Large Consumers in particular believe that IESO **Information quality** needs to be improved.
 - By providing more transparency, as well as operating and shaping the electricity system and market in a transparent manner.
 - Importers/Exporters, Indigenous, and Other Interested Stakeholders feel **Transparent leadership** needs improvement.
 - By providing stakeholders with the rationale for decisions and explaining how stakeholder input was used in decision-making.
 - Importer/Exporters, Large Consumers, and Emerging Technologies feel **Energy sector evolution** needs improvement.
- Included in the *Transparent leadership* theme are actions, such as clearly communicating outcomes, considering lessons learned, balancing sector interests in decision-making, providing rationale for decisions, and explaining how stakeholders' input was used, which is rated particularly low.
 - This can be clearly tied to the low ratings of “transparent” and “Operating and shaping the electricity system in a transparent manner” which fall under the *Information quality* objective.
- The IESO receives the strongest ratings for its **Corporate attitude/behaviour**, a positive sign as it is a key driver in overall satisfaction.
 - All stakeholder groups believe that Corporate attitude/behaviour set of attributes must be sustained.
 - Indigenous Communities and Emerging technologies also rate the Stakeholder alignment theme strongly and indicate this must be maintained.

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Implications for the Future

Within the seven thematic areas, the following behaviours or actions are identified as areas for improvement:

- **Stakeholder Alignment** – While this performance objective rates well, the only area of needed improvement (lowest rating on the 8-10 scale) is “supporting the operations of stakeholders’ organizations”.
- **Information Quality** – the improvement areas have to do with general transparency and “operating and shaping the electricity system and market in a transparent manner”. “Sharing relevant and valued analysis and expertise” could also be improved.
- **Corporate Attitude/Behaviour** – while an area of strong performance, stakeholders identified IESO “openness and understanding” as areas to improve.
- **Community Inclusiveness** – also rated with strong performance overall, the key areas of attention include “aligning engagement with community needs/interests”, and “acting on input from communities, customers and stakeholders”.
- **Operational Excellence** – this year, all attributes contained in “operational excellence” were rated positively.
- **Energy Sector Evolution** – one of the lower performance areas, the key areas in need of the most attention here relate to “operating in an effective manner” and “innovation in the sector in terms of both operations and technology.”
- **Transparent Leadership** – an area of continuous improvement for engaged stakeholders, this includes “taking lessons-learned into consideration, balancing the various sector interests in decision-making, providing rationale for decision, and explaining how stakeholder input was used”.