

# 3. CITIZEN REPORT CARDS

## KEEP WATCH

### IN A NUTSHELL

Most people have an opinion of their government or the services it provides, but how often do they actually take the time to write down their views?

Citizen report cards are a way to do just this. The cards are used to collect feedback on a public service by the people who use them. It's not only about gathering information – cards are a great way to get citizens thinking about the quality of public services they receive, whether that's public transport, education, or essential services.

Collecting citizen report cards allows you to create a powerful dataset that provides insights into service delivery. An individual card might not seem meaningful in itself, but a collection of hundreds or thousands of completed cards can generate new perspectives on government performance – which can then be used for the media and sharing with the public.

### REMEMBER

Before getting started on planning, it's important to verify that this activity is in line with your national and local laws and to check what legal permits, if any, are required. You should also let your parents know what you have planned. If you're not permitted to carry out this task, please refer to our other youth activities.

### HOW DO YOU SET IT UP?

- 1. Choose a topic:** Identify what – or whom – it is that you're assessing (e.g. political candidates or a sector).
- 2. Identify your audience:** Know who should have a say in your survey. For instance, if you're analysing a school's performance, select students and parents of that school.
- 3. Know what you're getting yourself into:** It is vital to talk to target organisations and other stakeholders – like the media – at the beginning rather than at the end.
- 4. Define your sample:** Consider how many people need to take part in order to make sure the survey is statistically meaningful. You can start by choosing whichever sample is smaller: 200 people or 10 per cent of the total population (whichever is less).
- 5. Pick your questions:** Build your questionnaire and keep it simple – your goal is to connect with people from all walks of life.
- 6. Get prepared:** Train those people conducting the survey on questioning and research methods.

### 3. CITIZEN REPORT CARDS

7. **Spread the word!** Promote the survey to attract more people.
8. **Ask the public:** Survey citizens to find out their views on your chosen topic.
9. **Process your results:** Crunch the data and look for meaningful patterns. Focus on parts of data where feedback is most one-sided. What does the data tell you? Is the government doing something very poorly in particular?
10. **Share your findings!** Let the media and your community know if the service meets expectations. Disclose any shortcomings or achievements.
11. **Build for the long term:** Who is going to run the same survey in the future? Map out how you intend to follow up with the institution you've assessed.

---

#### WHY DO IT?

- Citizen report cards enhance public awareness on issues of service quality. They encourage citizens to proactively seek higher standards from governments and service providers.
- Citizen report cards can encourage new discussions in communities about the standards that citizens should expect and deserve.

---

#### YOU CAN MAKE IT HAPPEN

- Show a desire to *collaborate* and explore problems with citizens, rather than *telling* them about problems in their community.
- Don't let your report card programme become a vehicle for wider discontent. Constructive criticism is something an agency can listen to and act on – personal attacks and political agendas are not.

---

#### WHAT ARE THE LIMITATIONS?

- Big data matters – you need to take time to get a lot of people taking part in the survey. It's also important to be sure that the numbers are correct. Any inaccurate data can hurt your credibility in the future.
- An uncooperative institution can disregard this process and results easily at times. To deter this, try to find a trustworthy ally in the agency that can advocate for your findings within the sector.

Source: Information on citizen report cards is adapted from PG Exchange – an initiative by CIVICUS, the World Alliance for Citizen Participation. Find out more: [www.pgexchange.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=164&Itemid=121](http://www.pgexchange.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=164&Itemid=121)

---

#### IDEA IN ACTION

##### Philippines: First Time Voters

The Center for Youth Advocacy and Networking, a civil society organisation, has worked on the First Time Voters project, an electoral reform advocacy programme, for over a decade. The youth report card programme was used to determine young people's satisfaction levels on the accomplishments and platforms of the different presidential candidates of 2010.

Find out more: [www.cyanphilipinas.wordpress.com/about](http://www.cyanphilipinas.wordpress.com/about)

---

#### RESOURCE

##### Improving Local Governance and Service Delivery: Citizen Report Card Learning Tool Kit

This e-learning toolkit is designed to help users develop the basic knowledge and skills to implement citizen report cards.

Find out more: [gateway.transparency.org/tools/detail/319](http://gateway.transparency.org/tools/detail/319)