What is ClimateQUAL®?

ClimateQUAL®: Organizational Climate and Diversity Assessment is an assessment of library staff perceptions concerning (a) their library’s commitment to the principles of diversity, (b) organizational policies and procedures, and (c) staff attitudes. It is an online survey with questions designed to understand the impact perceptions have on service quality in a library setting. The survey addresses a number of climate issues, such as diversity, teamwork, learning, and fairness, as well as current managerial practices, and staff attitudes and beliefs.

ClimateQUAL® aims to:

- Foster a culture of healthy organizational climate and diversity;
- Help libraries better understand staff perceptions of organizational climate and diversity;
- Facilitate the on-going collection and interpretation of staff feedback;
- Identify best practices in managing organizational climate; and
- Enable libraries to interpret and act on data.

Libraries use these data to improve their organizational climate and diversity culture for delivering superior services to the communities they serve.

Dr. Paul Hanges, lead researcher from the University of Maryland Industrial and Organizational Psychology Program, is working with a new ground breaking concept resulting from the ClimateQUAL® research: the “healthy organization” that makes an empirical connection between organization health and the service experience of customers. The findings of the assessment can in turn lead to remedial action to improve climate positively.

What are the origins of ClimateQUAL®?

In 1999, the University of Maryland Libraries partnered with the University of Maryland Industrial and Organizational Psychology (I/OP) program to develop an assessment of the climate and culture of the University of Maryland libraries: the Organizational Climate and Diversity Assessment (OCDA). In 2004, the UM Libraries once again partnered with the I/OP program to provide an updated “snapshot.” The analyses revealed that a number of positive changes had occurred over the four year interval between the two surveys. This work not only identified the dimensions of climate and culture important for a healthy organization in a library setting, but also provided proof that feedback from the OCDA survey, when taken seriously, can have practical organizational level benefits.

In 2007, ARL and the UM Libraries, in partnership with the I/OP program tested the generalizability of the OCDA protocol across multiple library organizations. During Phase I, five ARL institutions tested a modified OCDA survey and validated the hypothesis that a healthy organization provides better customer service. In 2008, during Phase II, ten ARL and non-ARL institutions expanded the pilot further refining the protocol. The protocol was transferred to ARL in 2009 for ongoing operation of a library assessment service, now known as ClimateQUAL®: OCDA, and focuses on measuring internal organizational climate and diversity.
Why participate, and what is involved?

ClimateQUAL® provides a useful management tool for effective organizational adaptation that uses deep assessment of a library’s staff to plumb the dimensions of climate and organizational culture important for a healthy organization in a library setting. This provides feedback from the survey that is grounded in a baseline from the libraries that have already participated. Using normative scales and institutional results effectively, significant improvements can be achieved. The most effective techniques for remediation are not top-down, but those that engage the entire staff.

Participating libraries will be asked for the following support:

- Assistance with project funding (2012 fee: $5000 per participant);
- Assignment of a contact person to work with us throughout the project;
- Attendance of group meetings held during ALA;
- Commitment to repeat the survey periodically to measure the impact of improvement strategies over time; and
- Commitment to work with ClimateQUAL® community members to develop “best practices” strategies for using survey results as a tool for organizational and service improvement.

How is the ClimateQUAL® survey conducted?

ClimateQUAL® is an online Web based survey administered online using SurveyMonkey.com, a well-known survey software that offers a variety of customization and data analysis options. The survey period is 3 weeks. ClimateQUAL® consists of approximately 200 questions representing the nine climate dimensions, seven organizational attitude scales, and additional demographic questions. There is also a free-text comments box at the end of the survey.

The first part of the survey asks respondents to answer based on individual membership in a group (i.e., membership in minority groups including, but not limited to: race, ethnicity, gender, religion, educational background, tenure, sexual orientation, disability, rank, age, and/or nationality). In the second part, respondents answer questions related to their designated team or work unit.

Respondent confidentiality is of paramount concern, given the sensitive nature of the questions and responses. Results are reported back to individual institutions in a way that will not compromise respondent identity. An overview report is provided to the library with the comments of the respondents. Only libraries with large enough sample sizes can receive additional analysis for specific subgroups within the organization, as an add-on service.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Detailed information on ClimateQUAL®, including FAQs, a 15 minute taped podcast by Dr. Paul Hanges describing the theory behind ClimateQUAL®, UM Libraries’ survey reports, and a bibliography of relevant research publications, is available at:

www.climatequal.org

For more information or to express of interest in participating, please contact:
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