

Lessons learned from one of New Zealand's most challenging civil engineering projects: rebuilding the earthquake damaged pipes, roads, bridges and retaining walls in the city of Christchurch 2011 - 2016.

## Numbers add up in communication and engagement

**Story:** Independent Research Informs Communications and Engagement

**Theme:** Communications and Community

---

A document which describes SCIRT's approach to quantifying the impact of its communications and community engagement activities.

This document has been provided as an example of a tool that might be useful for other organisations undertaking complex disaster recovery or infrastructure rebuild programmes.

For more information about this document, visit [www.scirtlearninglegacy.org.nz](http://www.scirtlearninglegacy.org.nz)



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 New Zealand License](#).

The authors, and Stronger Christchurch Infrastructure Rebuild Team (SCIRT) have taken all reasonable care to ensure the accuracy of the information supplied in this legacy document. However, neither the authors nor SCIRT, warrant that the information contained in this legacy document will be complete or free of errors or inaccuracies. By using this legacy document you accept all liability arising from your use of it. Neither the authors nor SCIRT, will be liable for any loss or damage suffered by any person arising from the use of this legacy document, however caused.

## Numbers add up in communication and engagement

Independent research underpinned SCIRT's communications programme, providing insights into the public's perception of its work and identifying areas for improvement.



*Engaging approach: Engineer Marcia Beuth talks to a local resident about SCIRT work in the area.*

In November 2011, SCIRT established a research programme to measure and guide its performance in the eyes of the community over the next five years.

The Objectives of the SCIRT Alliance Agreement made a commitment to respecting Christchurch people's need for open, proactive communications and high levels of customer service.

SCIRT recognised the rebuild would involve extensive disruption to people's daily lives, and the public's support would be essential to help get the job done.

To encourage teams to strive for peak performance in community engagement, SCIRT set ambitious customer satisfaction key performance indicator (KPI) targets.

The research programme consisted of:

- A **telephone survey** of a representative sample of the wider Christchurch community, conducted six monthly.

**Objective:** To measure wider community satisfaction and tolerance of the horizontal rebuild in general, progress, perceptions of SCIRT, effectiveness of communication tools, opportunities for improvement and items of topical interest.

- A **face-to-face** survey of 400 to 600 residents and business owners in areas where SCIRT was working, conducted four monthly.

**Objective:** To measure levels of satisfaction among people affected by SCIRT work, regarding communications, traffic management, site management and interaction with site crews, and identify areas for improvement.

For more details on the areas covered in each survey, refer to the questionnaires attached.

### The Alliance Objectives required SCIRT to:

#### Maintain an open and honest dialogue with all residents over the rebuild effort.

- Work to ensure all messages to communities are coordinated with other rebuild efforts.
- Be proactive with communication and make it face-to-face where possible.
- Do what we say we will do.
- Communicate in simple language.

#### Maintain high levels of customer service in the rebuild effort.

- Build rapport with affected residents and go the extra mile where required.
- Coordinate all works to minimise disruption to the customer.

## Results

Overall scores reflected high levels of satisfaction with SCIRT work and communication. On average, SCIRT achieved satisfaction scores of 80 per cent, the highest of any rebuild organisation.

The following scores were achieved:

% satisfied	Oct 13	Apr 14	Nov 14	Apr 15	Nov 15	Oct 16
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Overall satisfaction with the job SCIRT does	83	77	77	83	76	73

October 2016, Community Perceptions, telephone survey, conducted by Opinions Market Research

## Satisfaction with SCIRT site operations

% satisfied	Nov 11	Apr 12	Oct 12	Apr 13	Oct 13	Apr 14	Nov 14	Apr 15	Nov 15	Oct 16
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Information on traffic impacts due to repairs	-	49	56	48	64	78	66	69	60	61
Approachability of the rebuild team	-	-	-	67	75	81	80	85	78	72
Clarity of information as to who to contact	-	-	-	-	73	83	82	79	75	71
Access to property	83	77	77	76	78	85	85	82	76	81
Ease of navigating roads affected by the repairs	61	59	57	54	66	55	57	51	50	50
The way traffic around project sites is managed	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	70	63
Traffic management arrows are clear	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	78	75
Traffic signage is clear	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	75	68
Traffic management cones are well placed	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	72	69
Detours are easy to follow	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	65	65
Tidiness of sites during repairs	75	75	78	74	77	72	80	77	74	69
Safety practices for workers	-	-	-	-	85	85	84	90	86	86
Safety practices for pedestrians	-	-	-	-	77	72	77	84	76	76
Safety practices for traffic	-	-	-	-	79	78	77	85	80	78
Repairs were completed as stated	-	-	-	-	67	65	71	73	71	67
Repairs were completed to an acceptable standard	-	-	-	-	71	65	76	74	71	70
Repairs were completed in timeframe stated	-	-	-	-	61	54	65	71	65	55

October 2016, Community Perceptions, telephone survey, conducted by Opinions Market Research

## Levels of tolerance with the rebuild

% tolerant/patient	Nov 14	Apr 15	Nov 15	Oct 16
	%	%	%	%
With the SCIRT work	81	83	81	77
With the rebuild of the city overall	70	78	71	67
With the Christchurch rebuild overall	-	-	69	69

October 2016, Community Perceptions, telephone survey, conducted by Opinions Market Research

## Findings Indicate Constant Overall Satisfaction and Improvement in Specific Aspects

Satisfaction with communications - Total sample																
Those who received communications: sample size:	Of those who received any communications % satisfied															
	Oct 11	Mar 12	Jun 12	Sept 12	Mar 13	Jul 13	Nov 13	Mar 14	Jul 14	Nov 14	Mar 15	Jul 15	Nov 15	May 16		
	282-291	289-300	128-268	162-343	215-395	110-121	121-380	135-375	255-566	213-569	213-541	237-577	204-576	240-585		
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Overall satisfaction	77	85	90	87	83	81	75	78	82	73	74	68	76	75		
Service provided during contact with delivery team*	-	-	85	80	77	84	86	81	83	80	78	79	85	86		
Timeliness of information	69	83	89	85	77	84	86	84	85	86	86	82	83	85		
Enough information throughout the project	-	-	-	-	-	79	75	73	82	75	75	76	72	80		
Clear contact for further information	-	-	-	-	-	90	85	89	88	85	87	83	75	79		
Explanation of impacts	-	-	86	80	78	81	77	78	82	78	79	76	77	78		
Accuracy of information	67	81	88	80	79	81	84	83	88	81	84	79	76	78		

May 2016, Areas Undergoing Rebuild, face to face survey, conducted by Opinions Market Research

## Satisfaction with communications from SCIRT

% satisfied	Nov 11	Apr 12	Oct 12	Apr 13	Oct 13	Apr 14	Nov 14	Apr 15	Nov 15	Oct 16
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Overall satisfaction with the information	-	-	-	-	86	86	85	89	82	83
Satisfaction that the information was sufficient	50	78	80	79	92	89	85	92	88	85
Satisfaction with the accuracy of the information	58	67	79	77	84	87	85	88	81	82
Satisfaction with the timeliness of the information	60	70	80	77	78	89	87	90	88	85
Satisfaction with the explanation of the impacts	-	-	-	-	78	86	84	86	83	79
Satisfaction with the approachability of the team	-	-	-	63	71	84	90	87	73	71
Satisfaction with knowing enough about the progress SCIRT is making in the local area	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	63	62
Satisfaction with being kept up to date on SCIRT's progress overall	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	59	60
Satisfaction with knowing enough about progress SCIRT is making across Christchurch overall	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	55	51

October 2016, Community Perceptions, telephone survey, conducted by Opinions Market Research



Taking notice: Communications team member Jennifer Randell hands the 1.5 millionth work notice to a Parklands resident.



*Trick of the trade: Signage has been among the myriad communications tools utilised by SCIRT.*

### Dig deep into research

The communications team analysed survey results and developed strategies to improve performance.

Results in *Areas Undergoing Rebuild* were broken down by Delivery Teams. Each team could dig deep into the findings – down to the project level – to identify improvements. Later, the survey included areas where work was under way to enable teams to respond immediately to concerns.

Results were broken down by geographical area, enabling targeted communications.

SCIRT recognised businesses were particularly affected by the work, and their needs differed to those of residents. The survey asked specific questions of businesses and split the results out.

### Research-driven action

Analysing and discussing the findings of the May 2016 *Areas Undergoing Rebuild* survey, the team identified more than 15 ways to improve community satisfaction.

These included:

- Using more signage, focusing on clarity and consistency.
- Continuing to deliver work notices, with regular updates throughout the project.
- Ensuring work notices provided enough information, including the construction impacts, traffic issues and accurate time frames.

- Researching the demographics of an area and tailoring communications.
- Increasing face-to-face conversations with residents and business owners.
- Encouraging engineers to provide accurate project dates so residents were advised within required time frames.
- Holding more community celebrations for work completions.
- Increasing SCIRT's presence in the *Future Christchurch Update* to a two-page spread.
- Featuring information about major projects and progress in e-newsletters.
- Generating content for community newsletters in areas affected by SCIRT work.

### Competition and collaboration

The research helped encourage competition and collaboration between the Delivery Team communications teams, driving peak performance.

SCIRT was a results-focused organisation that utilised empirical data to measure performance.

An aggregate of key ratings from later surveys provided a net customer satisfaction score for each Delivery Team. This accounted for 20 per cent of the delivery performance score (DPS), which determined project allocation. Individual Delivery Teams had an incentive to score well.

The Delivery Team communications teams took their individual results to heart, worked hard to lift their figures when they lagged behind their peers, and took great pride in a top result.

Collegial support was provided when individual teams scored poorly. With teams working in the same geographic areas, the community benefited from a uniformly positive experience.

Across SCIRT, there was pride in achieving a high customer satisfaction rate.

By the end of the programme, final scores for the Delivery Teams were very similar.



## Working together

In one survey, one Delivery Team's score was significantly below those of other teams. Changes in leadership and staff turnover had affected performance, together with a high volume of work.

The team leader pinpointed the areas that needed to be addressed, and worked with her team to develop an action plan.

They identified three areas requiring work:

- More frequent updates were needed during work in progress.
- More face-to-face contact with businesses and residents was vital.
- More toolbox sessions with engineers and crews helped improve community satisfaction.

Other Delivery Team communications leaders provided support and advice to the team leader.

This prompted an amazing turnaround for the team in the next survey. Overall customer satisfaction with communications rose 15 points and satisfaction with works increased 19 points.

Other Delivery Team communications staff adopted this methodology for subsequent surveys.

## Tracking trends

Most questions from the original surveys were retained to provide insight into trends and changes during the programme.

Questions were reviewed before each survey. Irrelevant questions were deleted, while others that

provided more insight were added.

For example, questions relating to:

- SCIRT projects in the central city were removed a year after work was completed.
- Feedback about traffic management was added.
- Checks on the relevance of key messaging were added.
- The public understanding of post-SCIRT repairs were added.

## Lessons learnt

- Independent research provided a useful, quantitative measure of community satisfaction.
- Independent statistics lent credibility to the assessment of community satisfaction and cemented its status as a contributor to performance.
- Questions needed to be granular to identify specific areas to applaud or address.
- Individual team scores spurred competition and collaboration, which, in turn, lifted overall performance.
- Research results needed to be analysed to be useful and not just left on the shelf.
- Core questions needed to be retained to provide a longitudinal perspective.
- Questionnaires needed to be reviewed before each round of research to reflect changes, add items of topical interest and provide a deeper understanding of areas of possible concern.



*Team talk: Communications team member Marcus Gibbs underlines the importance of community relations to site workers.*