

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
For More Information, contact:
William SaintAmour, 877-888-0209

Citizen Satisfaction with Local Communities Suffers because of Economy; But Upside Opportunities are Significant

New Resident Study of Florida Communities Reveals High Impact Improvement Areas

ANN ARBOR, Mich. (May 19, 2009) – A new Florida study shows the economy stifles local community satisfaction, but local officials can lift scores in other areas. The 2009 Florida Baseline Study of the Cobalt Citizen Satisfaction Index (CCSS) debuts at 59.2 on a 100-point scale.

Overall satisfaction with Florida’s local communities is slightly higher than the national score of 58.0. The index employs the scientific methodology of the University of Michigan’s American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI). Community scores for all states studied lag below other sectors measured by the ACSI.

“The slumping national economy gets all the headlines, but local economies are feeling it harder and it shows,” said Xavier Quenaudon, vice president with CFI Group and head of analysis for the study. “In many communities, rising unemployment, depreciating home values, and a shrinking tax base make it tough for communities to fully support important local initiatives. It’s a real challenge for leadership.”

“Overall satisfaction is a helpful performance metric for local leaders,” said William SaintAmour, Executive Director of the non-profit Cobalt Community Research. “The practical value is its effect on resident actions: remaining in the community, recommending it to others, volunteering, and encouraging business startups.”

The CCSS survey measures citizen satisfaction with 15 components of community characteristics and local government services. According to the survey, Florida citizens are most satisfied with Library (77.2), Fire Department (77.1), and Shopping Opportunities (76.8). Among the components to the local community experience that citizens say require the most improvement include Economic Health (41.9), Local Government Management (53.4), and Public Schools (54.0).

Among the areas citizens rated about their local government, citizens were most dissatisfied with how they believe their tax dollars are being spent (41.8) and communication with the public (53.4). The lowest scoring attribute for the economic health component was the quality of jobs (34.8).

CCSS is designed to help individual communities optimize the effectiveness of limited resources by measuring the independent effect each community component has on citizen satisfaction. Satisfaction then drives “behaviors” that have practical benefits for the communities, and targeted improvements can have a significant positive effect. For example, a comparison of citizens with high satisfaction (those above 85) and those with relatively low satisfaction (scoring 60 or below) shows that highly satisfied citizens rate quality of life 44% higher, are 49% more likely to remain in the community, and 70% more likely to support the current local government administration. Other desirable behavior intentions include likelihood to recommend the

community as a place to live (59% higher for highly satisfied group), likelihood to volunteer (+33%), and likelihood to encourage business start-up (+53%).

“Not all priorities are created equal, so it is important to identify where communities will get their biggest bang for the taxpayer buck,” said Quenaudon. “Citizens are essentially telling us that community leadership is falling short in economic health, public schools, spending decisions, and communication. Easier said than done, but knowing where to put your resources is a start.”

“The Cobalt Citizen Satisfaction Survey provides public officials with credible, fact-driven direction for action that supports quality decision-making,” said William SaintAmour. “Such citizen-focused performance measurement also supports local governments’ efforts to engage citizens in the strategic planning and budgeting process and promotes accountability citizens are calling for. While this baseline study serves as a statewide benchmark, progress can only be measured if individual communities participate in this process.”

The full is available for download at no charge at www.cobaltcommunityresearch.org/CCSS or at www.cfigroup.com.

About CFI Group

CFI Group (www.cfigroup.com) turns “voice of the customer” survey data into customer satisfaction improvement strategies. Inventors of the University of Michigan’s American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI), CFI Group is able to apply this technology to identify product and service improvements that will maximize ROI. For over twenty years, CFI Group has applied ACSI best practices worldwide to help clients drive customer loyalty, recommendations, and firm value. CFI Group’s clients include the American Cancer Society, Arrow Electronics, AT&T South, Best Buy, British Telecom, Barclay’s Bank, DIRECTV, Home Shopping Network, Toys ‘R Us, UPS, NASA, and Yahoo!

About Cobalt Community Research

Cobalt Community Research (www.cobaltcommunityresearch.org) is a 501c3 non-profit organization with a mission to provide research and educational tools that help local governments thrive as changes emerge in the economic, demographic and social landscape. Cobalt is located in Lansing, MI.

###