Public Procurement Benchmark:
2012 Survey Report

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Introduction

Purpose: NIGP’s Public Procurement Benchmarking Survey is a standardized process for gathering key public sector procurement data so that individual agencies have a structured way to compare their operations to those of other public procurement agencies. Survey results focus on specific operating practices and processes, which allow individual agencies to compare and identify potential opportunities to improve operating practices within their organization.

Conducted by: The National Institute of Governmental Purchasing, Inc. (NIGP), the PPRC, and Deltek

NIGP – Developing, supporting and promoting public procurement practitioners through premier educational and research programs, technical services and advocacy initiatives since 1944. With over 2,600 member agencies representing over 16,000 professionals across the United States, Canada and countries outside of North America, the Institute is international in its reach. Our goal is simple: recognition and esteem for the government procurement profession and its dedicated practitioners.

PPRC – Assisting the public procurement profession by providing applied research, training, education and scholarly publications since 1999. The center’s purpose is to build a professional community of scholars and practitioners devoted to improved efficiency, equality and transparency in public procurement.

The Deltek GovWin IQ Government Community is an online government intelligence portal that provides contacts, information and resources needed to create and award successful solicitations. On the supplier side, Deltek is the leading global provider of enterprise software and information solutions for professional services firms and government contractors.

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Executive Summary

Since 1944 NIGP has been a leader in advocating and supporting specialists in public procurement. Due to the complexity of the tasks our members face on daily basis, NIGP strives to provide practical and useful research findings that can assist everyday decisionmaking. Benchmarks and benchmarking, due to increasing budgetary constraints, represent two dimensions that our members find particularly important for their daily work.

This report is part of our successful Benchmark Reports Series and it identifies the condition and patterns of key organizational variables within public procurement practices in public sector agencies. This report emphasizes operating practices and processes that can be used by our members to evaluate potential opportunities for improvement. It is critical that the findings and the recommendations presented in this report be interpreted only within the context of the surveyed sample and with a clear understanding of the methodological constraints.

The results of our survey indicate that entities that are members of NIGP on average, in 2012, served 1,088,389 citizens. This number represents a 285,000 increase over the values that we noted in 2010. Since 2010 there has been an important increase in the number of public procurement full time equivalent (FTE) positions dedicated to contracting. Administrative and clerical support numbers, however, have experienced drastic decreases. Currently, public agencies are dedicating much more attention and resources to e-procurement software and IT operations. Yet, our members report only minimal spikes in the average numbers of training hours per FTE.

In comparison with 2010, the survey respondents have reported sensibly higher numbers along most revenue, expenditures and savings categories. In terms of procurement spend per citizen, for instance, in 2012 entities have spent on average $696.15, which represents a $90 increase. Similar to previous years, however, remains the fact that the public procurement process continues to be a mix in terms of its centralization tendencies. Half of the respondents indicated a procurement process that was centralized with delegated authority.

While due to the complexity of the area and the methodological limitations of any study of this type it is difficult to reach any exacting solutions, there are still multiple lessons and conclusions that can be drawn from these results.

The summary of the main recommendations derived from the analysis of the data are presented on the next page.
Recommendations

**Recommendations regarding training and professionalization**
1. Increase the annual number of training hours per FTE from an average of 7.3 to at least 20 hours.
2. Increase the percentage of FTEs holding appropriate certification beyond 25%.
3. Target annual professional development spend per procurement FTE of at least $700.

**Recommendations regarding cooperative procurement**
1. Whenever found appropriate, increase the efforts to emphasize cooperative purchasing and networks, while still performing due diligence in contracting.

**Recommendations regarding satisfaction surveys and reports**
1. Conduct satisfaction surveys (internal and external customers) at least once a year or with every major process or legislative change.
2. Attempt to measure and report savings and efficiency gains in order to delineate for internal and external stakeholders the value of the procurement process to the financial condition of government.

**Recommendations regarding spend management**
1. Establish practical structures and processes for spend management in order to examine performance and generate useful understandings.
2. Increase the levels of spend under management beyond 30%.
Section I: Overview & Background

The realities of the recent economic crisis have increased the levels of attention that public procurement receives and have pushed public procurement at the forefront of many governments’ agendas. Presently, it is common for public procurement to be considered a central tool in the strategic management of public funds. The data suggests a 10% increase in the number of procurement entities that report directly to finance. Good practice places procurement directly under senior management and independent of major user departments or divisions that are reliant on and/or can unduly influence procurement activities. As it has been the case throughout history, public procurement has been and continues to be indispensable instrument for achieving economic and social goals (McCrudden, 2004).

Within the context of diminishing financial possibilities of the public sector, decisions regarding appropriate course of action become increasingly difficult. It is in this sense that benchmarks and benchmarking can set up the grounds for effective efforts to improve performance. Quality data regarding the outputs and “best practices” of other agencies is critical in terms of the success of any reform or change initiative. Benchmarking can also provide the support for establishing performance success within an increasing volatile political environment associated with procurement spend. The data suggests an average of 0.3 protests per procurement FTE, with the overall favorable outcome rate dropping from 97% in 2010 to 93% in 2012.

Despite the increased complexity and demands on agencies, public procurement practices and processes appear to command high levels of satisfaction. For those who have surveyed their internal and external customers the satisfaction rates were approaching 90%.
Section II: Discussion of Benchmarks and Benchmarking

There are no doubts left that benchmarks and benchmarking have become critical for achieving excellence in public procurement and for successful public procurement reforms (Sanchez-Rodrigues, Martinez-Lorente & Clavel, 2003; Tudor, 2005). Due to changes in the nature of local governance their importance will only grow. Benchmarking in public procurement is important for several reasons; not the least being that it is seldom undertaken. NIGP is perhaps the only organization/research institution regularly addressing benchmarks and benchmarking in public procurement. Compared with other areas of public administration that commonly attract research efforts that would settle benchmarking questions, benchmarking studies are few and far in between. The complexity that is often associated with the area manages to discourage a much needed systematic research. Yet, in the context of current budgetary constraints, benchmarking remains a critical question that needs to be continuously addressed within public procurement. The Benchmarking Series represents one of the most in demand NIGP report series and NIGP will continue its dedication to the area in the future.

There are several principles that drive every evaluation of public procurement such as value for the money, efficiency, effectiveness, competition, ethics, transparency, accountability and administrative responsibility. Each concept, however, is contextually driven and quite often might conflict with the attainment of other principles. In attempting to maximize the value for the money for their citizens, governments have to address the multiple, at times contradictory, vectors of public interest, equity, justice, fairness and responsiveness (Korosec & Bartle, 2003).

The first question that arises then is - if the process of benchmarking is this complex, why benchmark? The first, and perhaps the most important explanation, is associated with the fact that benchmarking remains one of the better and most effective approaches in terms of evaluating and improving performance (Koh, Gunasekaran & Saad, 2005). A systematic overview and examination of what seems to work and what doesn’t within the public sector procurement provides a practical way of developing ideas and pathways toward improved processes.

A second major motivator behind the increasing need for and use of benchmarking approaches is their ability to uncover dynamics that might be missed by other evaluation techniques. The idea of “best practices” is at the core of benchmarking; hence, by employing benchmarking public agencies are able identify how their performance aligns with those similar agencies in comparable contexts (Triantafillou, 2007). By focusing on “best practices” an agency can isolate problematic areas and target their transformation through approaches that have been proven to work in other instances.

The establishment of realistic and useful benchmarks is a third major reason in support of continuous benchmarking efforts. Instilling and demanding performance in public procurement can become frustrating if the goals are not guided by representative benchmarks. Due to changes in the structures and mechanisms of governance what constitutes appropriate performance will change over time. As such, up to date and representative benchmarks become essential for any reform or organizational change effort.

Finally, benchmarks and benchmarking are able to delineate the status and development trends within the field. Either for purposes of policy or financial management, the knowledge of public procurement benchmarks have important impacts. These effects are expected to grow in size as more governments intensify their reliance on long term contracts and collaborations with private sector entities.
Section III: Findings, Recommendations and Conclusions

Responses and Findings

General Demographics

1. Please select your Entity type.

Total responding: 357

Other responses:
- Community Services Board
- Cooperative Procurement
- Education Service District
- Government Agency
- International Governmental Organization
- Not-for-Profit Home Owner Association
- Political Sub-Division of the State
- Pre-K-Post Grad School for the Deaf
- Public Retirement System

- Quasi Agency
- Sheriff’s Office
- Superior Court
- Tribal Government
- Unified City-County Government (2)
- Utilities Board
- Water and Sewer Utility
- Water Authority
2. Please indicate where your Entity is located.

Note: The map shows the regional response tallies as have been used in previous NIGP benchmark surveys.

Total responding: 356

Respondents by U.S. state:
- Alabama (1)
- Alaska (1)
- Arizona (13)
- Arkansas (1)
- California (19)
- Colorado (18)
- Connecticut (3)
- Delaware (2)
- District of Columbia (3)
- Florida (44)
- Georgia (10)
- Hawaii (0)
- Idaho (3)
- Illinois (7)
- Indiana (0)
- Iowa (1)
- Kansas (6)
- Kentucky (4)
- Louisiana (6)
- Maine (1)
- Maryland (20)
- Massachusetts (1)
- Michigan (11)
- Minnesota (4)
- Mississippi (5)
- Missouri (9)
- Montana (2)
- Nebraska (2)
- Nevada (3)
- New Hampshire (1)
- New Jersey (5)
- New Mexico (3)
- New York (4)
- North Carolina (7)
- North Dakota (0)
- Ohio (7)
- Oklahoma (5)
- Oregon (9)
- Pennsylvania (8)
- Rhode Island (0)
- South Carolina (12)
- South Dakota (0)
- Tennessee (5)
- Texas (24)
- Utah (1)
- Vermont (0)
- Virginia (23)
- Washington (7)
- West Virginia (1)
- Wisconsin (4)
- Wyoming (1)
- U.S. Territories (0)

Respondents by Canadian province:
- Alberta (4)
3. When did your most recent completed fiscal year end?

![Bar chart showing the distribution of fiscal year end dates]

- 06/30/2011: 183
- 09/30/2011: 64
- 12/31/2011: 73
- Other dates: 0, 2, 1, 8, 0, 0, 1, 1

Total responding: 357

4. What is the residential population served by your Entity?

- Total Population of Respondents: 279,716,019
  Note: This figure increased approximately 100 million from 2010.
- Average Population of Respondent: 1,088,389
  Note: This figure increased approximately 285,000 from 2010.

Total responding: 257
5. How many full time equivalent (FTE) positions (shown as a percentage within bands) does your Entity have?

The 2012 data showed a significant drop in the respondents representing entities with fewer than 200 FTEs, which fell from 28% to 8%. A commensurate increase was seen in responses from entities with 200 to 1,500 FTEs. Since 2007 respondents have clustered from the extremes into the 200 to 1,500 range.

- Total number of Entity FTEs: 326,538
- Average number of Entity FTEs per 100,000 of Population: 116.7

Total responding: 257
6. Regardless of actual titles, how many Full Time Equivalent (FTE) positions does Procurement have assigned to the following functions?

![Bar chart showing FTE distribution across different functions.](chart.png)

*Note: The “P-Card Administration” category was not included in the 2010 survey.*

Since 2010 employment has declined in Admin./Clerical Support and shifted to Buying/Contracting. IT support also surged. This could be a result of hiring freezes/layoffs forcing a shift of head count to mission-critical positions and increased use of procurement software. Some procurement officials indicate an increased demand for reports and using IT as a business system.

- Total number of Procurement FTEs Reported: 2,545
- Average number of Procurement FTEs per Entity FTE: 0.01
  
  *Note: This figure is consistent with that found in 2010.*

Total responding: 184

7. How many total hours did Procurement spend on internal training for its professional staff?

- Total annual number of Procurement Training Hours Reported: 18,744
- Average annual number of Procurement Training Hours per Procurement FTE: 7.3
  
  *Note: This figure represents a 0.9 hour increase over 2010.*

In 2007, over 60% of respondents provided 11-20 hours of training per procurement FTE. As staff has gotten smaller, roles and responsibilities have increased, reducing time and resources for training.

Total responding: 142
8. Using this definition of a Procurement Officer, "Procurement staff who spend more than 50% of their time on procurement related work," how many Procurement Officers (FTEs) hold an appropriate (in your judgment) procurement certification for their current duties?

- Percent of procurement FTEs holding an appropriate certification: 25%

Total responding: 159

9. Using the same definition of a Procurement Officer, how many Procurement Officers (FTEs) are actively pursuing an appropriate (again, in your judgment) procurement certification?

- Percent of procurement FTEs pursuing an appropriate certification: 9%

Total responding: 123

Revenue, Expenditures, & Savings

10. How much actual revenue did your Entity earn in the following areas?

**Surplus Property Disposal:**
(Total respondents: 118)
- Total Revenue Reported: $ 40,615,771
- Average Revenue per Procurement FTE: $30,584
  
  2010/2012 Average: $20,591

**Rebates: p-Card Program:**
(Total responding: 89)
- Total Revenue Reported: $ 7,064,229.00
  
  2010/2012 Average: $5,861,366
- Average Revenue per Procurement FTE: $7,483
  
  2010/2012 Average: $5,437

**Administrative fees for use of procurement contracts:**
(Total responding: 18)
- Total Revenue Reported: $1,321,438
  
  2010/2012 Average: $ 9,232,247
- Average Revenue per Procurement FTE: $2,322
  
  2010/2012 Average: $ 15,030

11. What was the total of your Entity's actual expenditures (no exclusions) in the most recently completed fiscal year?

- Total Spend Reported: $130.8 billion
- Average Spend per Citizen: $696.15
  
  *This figure represents an approximate $90 increase over 2010.*
- Average Entity Spend per Entity FTE: $570,081
  
  2010/2012 Average: $368,970

Total responding: 199

12. Please enter your total Cash Savings generated through Procurement activity during the most recently completed fiscal year.

- Total Cash Savings Reported: $433.2 million
- Average Cash Savings per Procurement FTE: $198,000

Total responding: 71

13. Please enter your total Non-Cash Savings generated through Procurement activity during the most recently completed fiscal year.

- Total Non-Cash Savings Reported: $214.5 million
- Average Cash Savings per Procurement FTE: $345,000

Total responding: 38

*Purchasing Organizational Structure*

14. Procurement reports to:

![Pie chart showing the percentage of respondents who report to different organizational positions.](chart)

The data show a 10% increase in those reporting to finance since 2010. Fiscal crisis has driven a delayed move toward giving finance more insight/control over all aspects of budget and spend.

Total responding: 188

Other responses:
- Agency Chief Contracting Officer
- Assistant Commissioner of Administration
15. Which organizational structure listed below BEST describes your purchasing function?

- Centralized Contracting/Decentralized Buying: $2 billion (14%)
- Centralized with Delegated Authority: $7 billion (50%)
- Centralized: $2.8 billion (20%)
- Decentralized with Central Review: $2.2 billion (15%)
- Decentralized: $87 million (1%)

Total responding: 188
16. Please indicate which of the following functions your Entity provides and if Procurement purchases for this function.

![Bar Chart](image)

Note: The combined total of the stacked bars represents the total percentage of respondents indicating that their entity provides the given function. For example, approximately 15 percent of all entities responding reported providing an airport. Thirteen percent of entities conduct purchasing for the airport function through the procurement division as indicated by the blue portion of the bar.

Total responding: 357

17. Please select all those for which Procurement contracts:

![Bar Chart](image)

Total responding: 357
Procurement spend is that portion of the public body’s expenses that may be within the scope of Procurement’s activity and can be affected through procurement involvement in the areas of cost, quality, service level/delivery, or terms. The following types of transactions are typically not part of procurement spend, and should be excluded:

- Employee-related expenditure, such as salaries and expense reimbursements
- Payments to individuals, such as foster care providers
- Payments to other public sector bodies (unless for commercially available services)
- Revenue refunds

18. What was the total value of Procurement Spend for your Entity?

- Total Procurement Spend Reported: $12.8 billion
- Average Procurement Spend per Procurement FTE: $10.1 million
- Percent of Entity Spend under Management by Procurement: 27%

Total responding: 95

19. What was the total of Procurement’s (department/division) actual operating expenditures?

- Total Procurement Operational Spend Reported: $1.3 billion
- Average Procurement Operational Spend per Procurement FTE: $795,000
- Procurement Operational Spend as a percentage of Procurement Spend: 10%

Total responding: 188

20. How much (in dollars) was spent on the professional development of Procurement’s staff?

- Total Professional Development Spend Reported: $1.1 million
- Average Professional Development Spend per Procurement FTE: $700
- Professional Development Spend as a percentage of Procurement Operational Spend: 0.07%

Total responding: 154

21. What is the total number and value of purchase orders issued by Procurement?

- Average number of Procurement POs issued per Procurement FTE: 385
- Average value of Procurement PO: $15,500

Total responding: 160

22. What is the total number and value of purchase orders issued by other departments under delegated authority?

- Average number of Department POs issues per Procurement FTE: 347
- Average value of Department PO: $5,500

Total responding: 46
23. What was your Entity’s (average) Procurement Spend (shown as a percentage) for each of the following categories?

Note: The chart above shows the average for all respondents who provided a figure in one or more categories.

Since 2007 the data shows a significant increase (approx. 33%) in the number of respondents reporting some spend in the construction category, although differences in the way the data was collected in that survey prevent an exact calculation of the change.

Total responding: 85
Cooperative Purchasing
The NIGP Dictionary defines Cooperative Procurement as “A variety of arrangements whereby two or more public procurement units purchase from the same supplier or multiple suppliers using a single IFB or RFP.”

24. Which statement BEST describes your authority to use cooperative contracts?

In a 2003 NIGP Pulse Poll, 8% indicated that cooperative purchasing is not authorized by the entity. Now it is down to 1%.

Total responding: 182

25. Which of the following cooperative contract types does your Entity use? (Select all that apply.)

Total responding: 182

Approximate percentage of Procurement Spend made via Cooperative Purchasing.

- Average for all respondents providing a figure: 10%

Total responding: 78
Thresholds

26. Amount up to which an Informal Quote can be Solicited
Total responding: 150

27. Amount at which Written Quotes must be Solicited
Total responding: 172

28. Amount at which a Formal Competition Must be Conducted
Total responding: 186
29. What is the highest contract award authority for the following: (shown as an average for all respondents)

- Client departments with delegated authority: $57,000
  Percent of Respondents indicating limited authority: 49%
  Percent of Respondents indicating unlimited authority: 3%
  Percent of Respondents indicating no delegation of authority: 48%
  Total responding: 218

- Procurement Director/Manager/Chief Procurement Officer: $360,000
  Percent of Respondents indicating limited authority: 64%
  Percent of Respondents indicating unlimited authority: 20%
  Percent of Respondents indicating no delegation of authority: 16%
  Total responding: 218

- Chief Executive Officer (City Manager, County Administrator, etc.): $8.9 million
  Percent of Respondents indicating limited authority: 53%
  Percent of Respondents indicating unlimited authority: 25%
  Percent of Respondents indicating no delegation of authority: 22%
  Total responding: 218

**Workload Indicators**
All figures are shown as an average per Procurement FTE so that readers can extrapolate comparative workloads for their own organizations.

30. Please indicate the number of transactions in each category.

- Letters of Interest to determine the field of suppliers available and interested: 6.3 per Procurement FTE
  Total responding: 47

- Letters or proposals of Qualifications used to prequalify suppliers for an opportunity: 3.7 per Procurement FTE
  Total responding: 68

- Request for Quotes (small purchases): 28.2 per Procurement FTE
  Total responding: 109

- Competitive Sealed Bidding - IFBs Issued: 7.3 per Procurement FTE
  Total responding: 130

- Competitive Negotiation - RFPs Issued: 3.0 per Procurement FTE
  Total responding: 129

- Original Orders Issued (Whether by purchase order, releases, etc.): 309.3 per Procurement FTE
  Total responding: 106

- Change Orders Issued: 39.8
  Total responding: 77

31. Emergency Contracts awarded over your formal threshold:

- Emergency Contracts issued: 1.1 per Procurement FTE

- Value of Emergency Contracts as a percentage of Total Procurement Spend: 20%

Total responding: 78
32. Sole Source Contracts awarded over your formal threshold:
(shown as an average for all respondents)

- Sole Source Awards issued: 123.3 per Procurement FTE
- Value of Sole Source Awards as a percentage of Total Procurement Spend: 14%

Total responding: 109

33. How many protests did your Entity receive in your most recently completed fiscal year? How many were determined in favor of your Entity?

- Protests: 0.3 per Procurement FTE
- Percent of Protests in Your Favor: 93% (-4.0% vs. 2010)

Total responding: 74

Average Cycle-Times
Cycle time is defined as the number of calendar days from receipt of a requisition to issuance of a purchase order or contract.

34. Please provide your Average Cycle Time (in calendar days) for the following:

![Average Cycle Time Chart]

Change vs. 2010 Figures:

- Formal Bids: -1.3 days
- Formal RFPs: +4.5 days
- Small Purchases: +2.0 days
Some procurement officials claim that the increase in cycle times since 2010 is likely a reflection of increased involvement of customer agencies in helping to craft solicitations to make sure they are “right” before they hit the street.

Total responding: 130

**Satisfaction Surveys**

If you conducted an internal procurement customer satisfaction survey during the most recently completed fiscal year, please indicate your average overall customer satisfaction score/rating.

- We conducted a supplier satisfaction survey, but it cannot be converted to a 100 point basis. 9%
- We conducted a supplier satisfaction survey, but prefer not to share the results. 2%
- We did not conduct a supplier satisfaction survey. 74%
- Total # Entities that Conducted a Convertible Survey 17%
- Average Satisfaction on a 100% Scale: 89%

Total responding: 186

36. If you conducted a supplier satisfaction survey during the most recently completed fiscal year, please indicate your average overall supplier satisfaction score/rating.

- We conducted a supplier satisfaction survey, but it cannot be converted to a 100 point basis. 6%
- We conducted a supplier satisfaction survey, but prefer not to share the results. 0%
- We did not conduct a supplier satisfaction survey. 86%
- Total # Entities that Conducted a Convertible Survey 8%
- Average Satisfaction on a 100% Scale: 87%

Total responding: 186
Detailed Recommendations

It appears that most agencies have not increased the number of training for FTEs to reflect the increased levels of complexity and responsibility. On average agencies report 7 hours of annual training per FTE; agencies should strive to provide training beyond this level. It is also suggested that to increase the rate of procurement specialist that hold appropriate certifications beyond 25% threshold.

Based on the overall responses to the survey it can be suggested that public agencies are not maximizing their opportunities in terms of cooperative purchasing. While 10% of spend through cooperative contracts represents a respectable level, there are many opportunities in collaboration and networks that remain underutilized, particularly when 99% report having authority to use cooperative procurement.

Performance in the public sector continues to be among current administrative priorities. It is recommended here that agencies develop structures and effective processes of managing spend in order to insure increased levels of performance. It is suggested that levels of spend under management below 30% might be unacceptable and agencies should undertake significant efforts to improve the condition.

Finally there is an obvious need for an improved attention to satisfaction surveys and performance measurements. Although administering evaluations of satisfaction and performance take time, no organizational change can be supported without a proper understanding of the status of a specific process. The result of such evaluations, among others, will identify areas that need improvement but might also develop communication lines between the agency and its customers. Furthermore, reporting savings and efficiency gain will justify and cement the important role played by public procurement to the financial condition of government.
Conclusions

From the analysis of the survey results it becomes readily apparent that public procurement remains a complex and intricate area of activity that cannot be constrained to rigid frames. While some trends such as higher savings, levels of activity and shortened processing times are welcomed, at the same time however there are several recent tendencies that might become problematic in the long run. First, individual public procurement specialists and agencies in general are undertaking an increased number of responsibilities compared to 2010. Yet, it appears that such actions are supported neither by adequate administrative framework nor by increased number of training hours per FTEs or professional certification.

Cooperative public purchasing remains somewhat underutilized as on average respondents indicated that only approximately 10% of procurement spend is undertaken through a cooperative platform. Furthermore our respondents report that formal RFPs and small purchases are taking on average an additional 4.5 days and 2 days, respectively, to complete. Finally, the data show that only 26% of the respondents have conducted internal customer surveys while only 14% surveyed suppliers.
References


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And of course, the all those who responded to the survey!
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Appendix: Method

Survey Method: SurveyMonkey.com on-line survey

Invitation method: E-mails through SurveyMonkey.com

Target Group: Public sector agencies in the NIGP database

Email Invitations sent: 2,358 on April 13, 2012

Reminder Sent: April 28, 2012

Final Reminder Sent: May 11, 2012

Survey Closed: May 23, 2012

Number of Responses: 357 (182 complete)