



INNOVATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SOCIETIES

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Interviewee: Victoria Esber

Interviewer: Maya Gainer

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GAINER: This is Maya Gainer. I am here with Director Victoria Esber of the Civil Service Commission (CSC). Director Esber, could you begin by telling me just a little about your background, the time you spent working at the CSC at the OSM (Office for Strategy Management) and now in Region 8.

ESBER: *I have spent 30 years already in the Civil Service Commission. I was in the OSM from 2005 until January of 2014. Basically, I [have spent] almost nine months at the Civil Service Regional Office Number 8.*

GAINER: So you've been at the OSM since the beginning of ARTA (Anti-Red Tape Act) implementation then.

ESBER: Yes.

GAINER: How do you see ARTA as different from previous programs the CSC had been involved in to measure service quality and get citizen feedback, such as PASADA (Public Service Delivery Audit) for instance?

ESBER: *It is different from the other client satisfaction assessment in the sense that the interviewer does not pretend to be a client. So he has a face-to-face interview with a client. He identifies or she identifies herself and then he or she gets to ask some questions informing him or her [the client] that it is confidential, that this is a 15-minute interview. It's actually a guided interview because we have a survey questionnaire, but the client does not get to answer the survey questionnaire because it is the interviewer who gets the answers straight from the client.*

GAINER: How did you decide to adopt the guided interview format?

ESBER: *Basically, we had a team who drafted the first survey questionnaire. Actually, it was not only the Civil Service Commission because if you're going to look at the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR), we are expected or mandated to conduct the survey in collaboration with the Development Academy of the Philippines. When we were drafting the survey questionnaire, there was the Development Academy of the Philippines, so we have actually some models, some assessment, but the models that we received were thick and would require a three-hour interview. Definitely we cannot do that.*

So we had this, we drafted this. We were guided by what is the purpose of the interview based on the law itself as well as the implementing rules and regulations of the Anti-Red Tape Act.

GAINER: So I understand the law itself came from Congress, but the CSC was certainly involved with drafting the IRR; were you involved in that process?

ESBER: *I was not involved in the IRR, no. I got to see the finished product.*

GAINER: So once you received the instructions laid out in the IRR, what did you think would maybe be some of the challenges to getting the law implemented effectively nationwide?

ESBER: *The challenge definitely would be educating and involving and engaging the client, because the Filipinos, our culture is, we are not exposed to social audit. So the tendency of Filipinos when they are asked for a survey is to say no. They would give you a thousand and one reasons like they need to hurry in going home, they don't have the time, and then they would ask you how long would it take. So basically it would be involving them and that was the first challenge that I saw because this is something new that we were introducing.*

GAINER: What was your strategy to overcome that and get the clients to be responsive?

ESBER: *At first we pilot tested the survey questionnaire to fifty agencies, and the sample was thirty. It would depend really on the approach of the researcher. We focused on the researcher—you see Filipinos, we are more into relationships. If you are friendly, if you are accommodating, if you are always smiling, they would [take the survey]. They wouldn't want to be approached that "you're a researcher, I would like to research..." Then you have to [make] small talk [with] them first and that is the best way to attract Filipinos when it comes to surveys. Do not tell them at once that this is a scientific survey; it will turn them off.*

GAINER: So aside from getting people to participate, were there other potential difficulties in implementing the RCS (Report Card Survey)?

ESBER: *It is not only the clients that are very difficult to engage, you also have to engage the agencies because the first impression of the agencies would be why, why would they like to know the quality or the client satisfaction of my [the agencies'] clients? It is like an affront to them. In the first place, we have to be very credible, and that is one big plus factor of the Civil Service Commission because we are high in credibility. They could be asking why CSC? Who are you? Aside from, I know that we have the mandate because it is provided in the IRR, but just the same you've got to have more, that was very important.*

GAINER: So how did you build the relationships with the agencies to get them behind this idea?

ESBER: *Through information dissemination, we also partnered [with] them. We have to inform them [of] the value of such an audit, the value of engaging the clients, the value of—this is one big important thing that we have to tell them: let us not limit ourselves to wearing the institutional hat if we wish to know how well are the services that we are giving. It is high time that we listen to these people, to the clients. Because if they are our masters, then we ought to hear what they are saying about us. Slowly, it wasn't very easy, it wasn't an overnight change. Without them telling, you could sense that they are not really open to that.*

How did we show also that we have the moral ascendancy? We did not survey ourselves. We had Pulse Asia—this is an independent survey group that surveyed the Civil Service Commission to show one and all that the Civil Service Commission is compliant, is the first agency that is compliant with the Anti-Red Tape Act, and we are not surveying ourselves, we are having somebody else do it.

GAINER: What were some of the arguments that you heard from agencies when they were pushing back on this idea? Why did they say it was something they didn't want to get into?

ESBER: *They are not yet ready. They still have to prepare their structure. They still have to train their front-line service providers and they still have to prepare their clients. I'm not so sure now, but maybe they have this fear that "our clients may not be giving us the rating that we would like to get; could you give us time to make up for our lapses in the past, so that by the time you interview, the clients are ready and we are ready also." Preparation also, that is one of the things, especially when it comes to structure, like how ready are*

their front-line service areas, how ready they are to comply with the no-lunch break policy.

GAINER: I understand that sometimes the commitments that they would make in the Citizen's Charter was also something that they would be a little hesitant about, to say we definitely will give you this in a day or something like that. Did you have to make any accommodations to help the agencies prepare?

ESBER: *We had actually a series of preparations. The first time that the law came out, it was some time in 2008. The first technical assistance that we had to do was to help them prepare or do the Citizen's Charter. I have to be very candid also in telling you that the first time that we did it, we were requiring the agencies, "Hey guys, submit your Citizen's Charter, prepare your Citizen's Charter."*

You already know the technical definition of the Citizen's Charter. It is supposed to be a pledge, a commitment that would contain the service standards of the agency. But the service standards have to be reengineered or streamlined first before it has to be published. But considering that we were pressed for time, there was no sincere or thorough streamlining. Whatever were the existing service standards, they were just published. So that there was no time for the agencies to say that if the issuance of licenses is three days, can we still streamline it? If existing three days, then we publish three days.

It wasn't really a quality Citizen's Charter. And this early we already had the DILG in helping us. So the DILG, the Department of Interior and Local Government, they also had helped the local government units in preparing their Citizen's Charter. The Civil Service Commission focused more on—although it was a partnership, the Civil Service Commission also helped and that's it. So the quality of the Citizen's Charter, perhaps, that is also one of the reasons why they were having second thoughts.

They could be thinking also that the things that we publish in the Citizen's Charter, how would the clients read it or find it. But I would see it also as something positive because, even that early, they already saw the need to enhance the Citizen's Charter or to publish something better. So I see that as a challenge already on the standards of the publishing.

GAINER: So considering there wasn't a lot of streamlining at the initial stages because of some of the limitations on time and such, have there been processes since then to help agencies improve their Citizen's Charters and really take on the challenge of improving their processes?

ESBER: *You see, I got excited with the ARTA because later on, if it was the Civil Service Commission only that was bent on having it implemented. I'm not so sure when was the performance-based bonus—I guess it was in 2012 when we first implemented it. The performance-based bonus is handled by the Department of Budget and Management (DBM). It is a results-based performance management system. We would like to gauge the performance of the employees. We were also imposing—I'm sorry for the word—but we were also imposing standards, and one of the standards before an agency could qualify for the performance-based bonus is the so-called "good governance conditions." One of these good governance conditions is compliance with the Anti-Red Tape Law, specifically if the agencies were able to publish their Citizen's Charter.*

So for example, this is one good way of really encouraging people because at the time when we started in 2008, at about 2010, I guess you could get the

figure from the PMO (ARTA Project Management Office) as to how many agencies or what was the percentage of completion when it comes to the publication of the Citizen's Charter. It is not that high. And although there is a punitive [factor]—if you don't have the Citizen's Charter, I mean the head of agency is responsible for that, he could be administratively liable.

But then no, it is not good to be using always the stick. The performance-based bonus was basically a carrot. We're going to reward you if you are 100% compliant with good governance conditions. One of them is the Citizen's Charter. So it was a way of inviting agencies that they have to be compliant. So it also helped us.

GAINER: Certainly having that financial incentive is a valuable tool. But to have the Citizen's Charter be really meaningful and have it help improve the quality of service, there has to still be that effort to streamline. Are there ways to incentivize that? My understanding of the good governance conditions is that you just post [information].

ESBER: *In the Citizen's Charter, it is stated there that the agency—let's say for example, they were not the best charters when we first had them. It is stated in the law that at least every two years, the Citizen's Charter would be reviewed/enhanced. It was an opportunity to keep on enhancing, because the Citizen's Charter is a work in progress. So the first review would be after two years, so if you published in 2009, then 2011 we are already reviewing, enhancing it. And we also have—if you have heard of the Service Delivery Excellence Enhancement Program?*

GAINER: No.

ESBER: *We hand-hold agencies in helping them streamline their processes, review, reengineer, and then look also at their structures. We develop also the capabilities. We enhance and develop the capabilities of front-line service providers. So the Service Delivery Excellence Program (SDEP) is one program. That is why we have the so-called "integrated ARTA implementation."*

You have the survey, and then we're going to do technical assistance. Then we also—to sustain those who are doing well, we also have the reward, the Citizens' Satisfaction Seal of Excellence.

GAINER: Yes. My understanding is that SDEP targets agencies that have failed the survey. I can imagine that helps with some of the process streamlining there. What about agencies that maybe got good, acceptable? Does the CSC provide targeted support to help them get even better, especially in terms of streamlining?

ESBER: *You see one thing that I can be proud of about the Civil Service Commission is we continue to challenge ourselves. While at first we were looking at high-density, high-volume agencies as our targets, we were not content with just counting how many agencies were we able to survey. So to raise the bar, the challenge is out of the many that you survey, how many are passing? That is an indication that, are agencies compliant? Or else, how are the clients finding the front-end service delivery of agencies?*

So we targeted last year—just last year because it is the second year—that 85% or 90, I'm not so sure of the figure, but 85 or 90% of the surveyed agencies must pass. Now how do we ensure that the agencies that we are surveying are passing, because definitely we cannot also lower our

standards, we cannot cheat ourselves just to be able to meet the targets. So we have the so-called proactive Service Delivery Excellence Program.

What do we mean by this? We are going to help agencies not only because they failed. Even before they are surveyed, even before if they already did the technical assistance of the Civil Service Commission, we are delivering the SDEP right at the doorstep. So we did it proactively because previously, SDEP was done only if you failed. But SDEP proactive, after we targeted a certain number of agencies should pass, we offered it.

GAINER: How do you choose which agencies to target with the proactive SDEP?

ESBER: *For the proactive, our target is—it was quite a tall order because I put in some of my experience when I got to implement what I was conceptualizing before. If my target is 63 agencies, I get a profile, I would ask my provincial directors, of the targets that we have, you've got to do a profiling, which of these would need [SDEP] the most. So we have to prioritize. We have to prioritize and then I also conducted a partnership forum with all the heads of agencies in my area of jurisdiction to tell them "let's be partners" not only in having the agencies surveyed but our target should be in having these agencies excellent.*

GAINER: Yes.

ESBER: *It was a tall order because I have to—this is one of the difficulties that I had when I was reassigned in the badly-hit typhoon islands. The common excuse is "we're not ready" because of the typhoon, the devastation. But the challenge that I have to keep with my co-directors, with my co-heads in the region is "Yes, the area has been badly hit. The best help that we could give these people is excellent service." It was a difficult thing to do because aside from restructuring, we were not only restructuring buildings, we were also restructuring spirits of people. So it was difficult. But just the same, when my region was able to get the excellent rating, oh, it was—I cannot describe the feeling.*

Okay, so a partnership, you have to really involve agencies, that we have to join hands and the Civil Service Commission will help you in doing this.

GAINER: So for people who maybe need to develop those kinds of relationships with other agencies, what do you think are some of the best ways to persuade them that we should work together?

ESBER: *What are the best ways that we should work together... First is we also have to show them that we have the resources and we have the capacity to help them. Like [we have to show that] our provincial directors are equipped with streamlining knowledge, because how can we help people if we are not at capacitated? One good thing also is that the Civil Service Commission is—before we conduct the survey, we train people. And we do not only train people on the conduct of survey, we also train them on how to do better SDEP. So it is a whole package.*

GAINER: So you have to show them that there is something in it for them. I wanted to talk in a little more depth about your experience in overseeing the design and initial implementation of the RCS and some of the considerations in creating the survey.

ESBER: *Okay.*

GAINER: First, looking at the law and the IRR, how did you decide what would be the most important things for you to measure during the survey process?

ESBER: *We have objectives on the conduct of the survey. These objectives are also based on the law. So we stick to the objectives. That's why if you're going to look at the survey, first is the ARTA compliance. We have to comply with what the law is requiring. Then the second is we would like to gauge also the client satisfaction. That is why we also formulated questions on how are we going to gauge the satisfaction of compliance. So basically that is how we figure out the questions.*

We did not only limit ourselves with the clients, we also would like to see how the researchers would evaluate the agency. So it is a combination of 80% survey questionnaire and 20% the researcher.

GAINER: Why did you decide that it would be important to have that 80/20 split that would get some objective and some—?

ESBER: *Based on the principle that [the] client is key or customer is key, and also the fact that they are the end-receivers of the agency, of the services that are being availed of so they are the best authorities. So we ought to give a higher percentage when it comes to the person [who will] teach us how much should be considered before getting the total client satisfaction or compliance with the ARTA. Then when it comes to the scoring also we kept on reviewing it.*

GAINER: What were some of the things that you were trying to take into account as you were making decisions about the scoring? Can you tell me a little bit about the process, how that evolved?

ESBER: *The process is like—when we conduct the survey, one of the causes is the structure. Let's say some agencies are not getting the budget that they should have been given. So when it comes to getting a share of the pie, they get less than the others. One reason why people were not satisfied was the quality of the restroom, the waiting room, so definitely it is a lot of budget for structure. So when we give the results of the agency and we have a chance to dialogue with the Department of Budget and Management, which is the agency in charge when it comes to division of the pie, we tell them that one of the reasons why people, why our clients are not satisfied is because of the quality of the structure and the waiting rooms. So hey guys, this is a scientific study that would show that there are some agencies whose budgets need to be given attention. This was a heads-up also for the DBM.*

So what I would like to emphasize, Maya, is that the Civil Service Commission was not alone—we did not keep the data to ourselves. We shared this with other agencies so that they would also know, they would also have a part. Then later on, when we started the ARTA, one of the challenges was funding, because to conduct a survey is money, right? It is very costly and we cannot be depending on the funding of the Civil Service Commission because we have also many priorities. But we were able to convince the Congress and we were able to convince the budget that, "Hey guys, if ARTA is really important, if we really wish to hear what our clients are saying, then we should put our money where our mouth is." We were getting already a budget for the ARTA.

GAINER: So how much did you need allocated?

ESBER: *At first it wasn't that big, 26 million.*

GAINER: You mentioned you had to do a bit of a campaign to persuade—.

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- ESBER:** Yes.
- GAINER:** So how did you get the people in charge of funding you to agree that this was a priority that they needed to put their money behind?
- ESBER:** *You have to make use also of other studies. This is where the value of other studies and research would come in. We also have the corruption index. Remember, when it comes to ARTA, it is also an anti-corruption campaign. So we were also measuring, among the many agencies, the agencies that measure business, processing, and licensing. Where is the Philippines when it comes to corruption perception? So we have to get money to push ARTA because ARTA would help in coming up with a higher rating in [anti-] corruption and even also in the business process.*
- GAINER:** So like the World Bank doing business ratings, the Transparency International CPI (Corruptions Perception Index)
- ESBER:** Yes.
- GAINER:** So these are tools that people found meaningful for them to improve in those ratings.
- ESBER:** Yes.
- GAINER:** Since you mentioned this, how do you see ARTA as a contributor towards the progress that the Philippines has made in those rankings?
- ESBER:** *The ARTA is interactive, it measures the efficiency, it measures the satisfaction of clients. In fact now we have coined a beautiful term. We are not only concerned with client satisfaction, it is now client endearment. We would like to be endeared to our clients, we would like to love them. So when we measure now, when we give our message to all the agencies that we would like, or [when] the people would like to know what is the quality of the services that we are giving—are they efficient? Are they effective? Are they ethical? Are they honest, least corrupt, less corrupt? Then we are also giving the message that we measured, so all of us need to do more, need to give more, need to give our best.*
- Because in the process we become competitive. I like it when people become competitive. Why? Because they will give their all. Let's say for example in one government agency, BIR (Bureau of Internal Revenue). BIR is one of those agencies that also got excellent ratings, but you know what is beautiful? The different district offices would compete as to which office would get the highest excellent rating. The different hospitals would compete, which hospital? So there is this element of giving their best because there is an agency that measures.*
- If we would stop measuring, then the thinking would be—or the spirit would be—anyway, there is no one checking, there is no one motivating so we could go a little lax, we could be lax. If we know that—then later on, Maya, what I would like to see—this is one thing—the Filipinos they are not really into research, correct?*
- GAINER:** Okay.
- ESBER:** *And they are not into measuring. The Filipinos for the longest time have been content with getting the least services. So when they were given services they would be very happy with an inch, because they do not know that they*

deserve a meter. I would like them to have the mentality that we should be assertive, we should demand this much because we deserve better services. So this is also a way of educating our clients. I would like to think that when people know that they are being surveyed, when people know that whatever they say will reach the head of the agency, and when they are also able to observe that hey, I suggested that and it seems that it is being implemented, then they would feel that they are empowered, that they are being listened to, so they will keep on telling and getting and giving feedback to the agency and that is one thing that would really help us improve further.

GAINER: So how do you encourage citizens to participate and to engage to give their feedback?

ESBER: *When we conduct the survey, after doing a series of questions, we always give them the opportunity to say, or to suggest, or to give other comments about the agency. Of course, it is also the assurance that everything is kept confidential and then that our approach is, "Please help us in helping the other government agencies give excellent service." That is how we tell them, and that is how we invite them or we encourage them to give their comments.*

GAINER: So you mentioned the confidentiality is important. What kinds of assurances do you need to give someone in order for them to give honest feedback that is really useful for this kind of survey?

ESBER: *I guess it is also the sincerity of the researcher, plus the fact that there was never an instance when we betrayed the confidence of our clients. Plus, for example in information dissemination, we make it public when some of their suggestions are being considered or are being implemented, because this is also a way of messaging and a way of telling them that [the] suggestions or recommendations of those interviewed are really bearing fruit. So when we are able to send this message that they are being considered and they are being implemented, then it will encourage them to go on. So communication is very important, communicating to them.*

GAINER: Yes, definitely. It sounds like the researchers themselves are quite important.

ESBER: Yes.

GAINER: Who administers the surveys, and how do you make sure that they're the kind of people that you want getting this important feedback?

ESBER: *Aside from training them, capacitating the researchers, we also have a set of qualifications. So they go through a screening process, and then they are trained. Then we also monitor how they are doing. At the end of every year, we make it a point to gather all the researchers. It is an opportunity for us to discuss the experience, to discuss the challenges, and then to discuss also the recommendations and more importantly, it is an opportunity for us to learn from each other and identify best practices. So we do this.*

GAINER: I understand initially there had been some partnerships with civil society to help. Can you tell me how that worked?

ESBER: *There are how many agencies in the Philippine bureaucracy, and there is only one Civil Service Commission. If you will observe it, if you go and look at our number of personnel, we only have how many, 1300. So definitely not all this 1300 are involved with research. How many are involved with research? So if you are going to look at it, it is not possible for the Civil Service Commission only to do the survey. So we need to partner. The civil society organizations or the NGOs (nongovernment organizations). There are also*

some NGOs who are really—when it comes to advocacy, when it comes to dedication and commitment to the ARTA and the anticorruption initiatives, they're very high. So we maximize on that, we partner with them. We partner also with academia, because they are also very good in research.

GAINER: So was this something that was sort of a decision you made in the initial stages that in order to cover more ground you would enlist some of the help from civil society?

ESBER: *One strategy first was we partnered with the Department of the Interior and Local Government so that when it comes to the conduct of a survey for local government units, then it is the agency that is in charge, the LGs (local governments), so we partnered with them. Then we also partnered with the CSOs (civil society organizations). Although the partnership with the CSOs was earlier, it came first before with the DILG, because we partnered already with the CSOs when we were still conducting the surveys with the LGs, the local government units.*

GAINER: So how did you approach them to suggest—and how did you find who you wanted to work with?

ESBER: *The invite was very simple. What is encouraging is that there were many people, there were many civil society organizations that were committed, that were interested in helping the government to be more effective, to be more ethical in the delivery of front-line services. So when we sent out the invitations, they came. They came.*

Then later on, the partnership was done through regions, like regional offices, because you know your area, you would be able to identify as to what agent, what CSOs, which NGO are you going to find.

GAINER: So then initially was that at a central level and then moved to the regions?

ESBER: *Yes, central and then cascaded to the regional offices.*

GAINER: So did that help in terms of getting people to be more open if it was a civil society representative? Sometimes that happens.

ESBER: *There were some organizations that were already engaged in research. They had experience in conducting research and you see these clients, these interviewees, sometimes, they could identify more when it is not the government that is asking questions because they feel here is someone who is not wearing the regulatory hat. Here is someone with whom I guess we could be more open. It also encourages them to be more open to the CSOs. The CSOs would also identify themselves that they are partnering with the Civil Service Commission in including front-line service delivery.*

GAINER: That sounds like it could be helpful.

ESBER: *Yes.*

GAINER: It is really an external—

ESBER: *Yes.*

GAINER: So did you observe that when people are being asked questions by the government versus a CSO representative that people would say different things because sometimes who is interviewing matters?

ESBER: *I am sorry, I have no facts that would back that, unless there is already some research being done by the ARTA.*

GAINER: But logically thinking, maybe—.

ESBER: *What I'm thinking is yes, because there are some people who are more comfortable. You see the area is also small, they have already identified who is from the government. For example, some of our researchers have been in the service for quite a long time, so [people may say], "Ah, that guy is from the Civil Service Commission." They are more open when the person is not from the agency.*

GAINER: So how have you preserved that? I understand now it is a recruitment process rather than getting volunteers.

ESBER: *The recruitment process—in my case, in the civil service regional office, we hired three external [people]. They are actually nurses who have experience in the handling of business, processing, and licensing research of the DTI (Department of Trade and Industry). So they have experience. I was lucky enough to get them. They are not identified yet with the Civil Service Commission. Although because they were very good, after the conduct of the survey. So next year we will be getting another set.*

GAINER: So these are people who come from somewhere outside the CSC and are only affiliated—.

ESBER: *Yes, and they are qualified by the end of the training.*

GAINER: So that helps prevent some of the interviewer effects.

ESBER: *Yes.*

GAINER: You mentioned sometimes people don't want to participate. If there is somebody who refuses, how do you accommodate that in the sampling?

ESBER: *My instruction, because I used to train the researchers, [is that] if people are not comfortable yet, we will not force them. Because if we will force them, the more they will run away. But what is important is that we continue with the information dissemination, that we continue to interview, so that when people get to listen to these people being interviewed and this is the result, that some of their suggestions are being implemented, that this is the result of the comments that were gathered from the clients for a particular agency. Then we would tell them or would invite them that the next time they may say yes or maybe.*

GAINER: So if there is someone who is really reluctant to participate, you just let them go and do you get another person then?

ESBER: *Yes, although no, because this is also part of the challenge on the researcher. If you do research and you know that you have a quota—let's say for example, I'm supposed to conduct this for three days and I'm supposed to get 10 clients per day, and I cannot be staying here for long because I need to consider resources, that's very important. So there are times when the researcher might be tempted to do a shortcut or to, for example, get anyone not qualified.*

So before we do that, we would get the figure, the daily average number of clients so that we can space out, we can have spacing so that not all clients

would be interviewed in the morning; it could also help the interview as well as the validity of that.

So we know for a fact, we already know before we go to the agency as to what is the average number of clients per day.

GAINER: So then you do an interval sampling method, right?

ESBER: Yes.

GAINER: So if one of the people that you're supposed to talk to refuses would you just go to the next person or would you wait for another interval?

ESBER: *Actually we try to—let's say for example so you refuse. "Ma'am, even if it is only for seven minutes or ten minutes." Because they will say, "I really have to hurry, I'm catching the last train/trip, I have to go." "Because this would really help us, we really would like to help the agency from where you have just taken your license. We really would like to help improve their service, and definitely you are one who could help us, considering that you have just availed of the services."*

GAINER: Is that usually persuasive, do you find that most of the time clients will respond?

ESBER: *Sometimes they say yes, but then you have to be true to your promise. If you said that [you would talk] for seven minutes then, go for seven minutes.*

GAINER: But in general have you observed that clients are fairly responsive when they're approached for the survey?

ESBER: *Yes they are, especially [now] that we are already on our third, fourth year. It is the exposure to the whole thing, because people already know that there are people, there are researchers going around, asking questions so that the agency can be helped. So maybe at first, but then slowly...*

GAINER: Some of the issues that you were trying to get at are fairly straightforward: "Is the bathroom clean?" But there is also some sensitivity, I understand, around the issue, especially of fixing. So how did you plan to get people to speak on those kinds of more sensitive subjects about fixing and hidden costs?

ESBER: *The whole fixing is you've got have a style in asking the question. Even if at the start of the interview, you have already assured them of the confidentiality, when you get to ask this question, you have to reassure them again. That anything that you said in answering this particular question will be held in strictest confidence. There is no way that this would be attributed to you. There is no way. So we really would just [like] to get this information. Sometimes the reassurance would be twice, thrice. So far also, as I said earlier, there has not [been] an instance where there was a breach of trust.*

GAINER: In terms of phrasing those kinds of questions, sometimes you have to really be really careful about the wording, so how did you decide on how to present that issue when you're asking a client?

ESBER: *We don't actually use the word fixer. Like if we're going to ask, was there someone, ma'am or sir, who helped you so that whatever—so that the license, so that the passport, so that the permit was given to you even earlier than the standards in Citizen's Charter. It is not necessarily that this person comes from the agency, it could just be somebody who was helpful enough to help you in getting the license.*

Because when you say "fixer" sometimes, there are some clients in some agencies who already know that there are indeed fixers. So they would tell you that, "Ma'am, there is this fixer who approached but then they were asking for this much and that much."

GAINER: So sometimes they bring it up, but otherwise you try to kind of get around the issue?

ESBER: Yes.

GAINER: Do you find that that usually works, that people are willing to say, "Well this person helped me," when they wouldn't say that person is a fixer, and I paid them?

ESBER: *Sometimes they do. In instances wherein we are really able to identify that there are fixers, because in the manual, the Civil Service Commission would also— within a month, it is our responsibility to talk with the head of the agency and tell them the findings. We discuss—this is very sensitive so we have a sit down with the head of the agency. Because there are times [when] the person is identified, and there are times also that, through description, because in the interview we would not mention the name, but they're going to discuss and when we tell the agency, "There is this guy, this 150 pounder—" "Ah yes." They know. Then sometimes they will tell us, "He is actually being observed, we already have people on that."*

GAINER: It sounds like this is a learning process, that there have been a series of pilots and it's scaled up gradually. Are there things that you learned from your initial test with the fifty agencies that you then used to adjust the survey?

ESBER: *After the fifty agencies, there were some revisions of the survey questions. There were some revisions. We also saw the value that when you talk to the clients—because our survey questionnaire was in English, you see?*

GAINER: Yes.

ESBER: *But just like when we do the Citizen's Charter, we tell the agency that they should be in the dialect predominantly spoken in the place, we were able to come up with translations of the survey questionnaire, because they could relate, they are warmer when you talk to them in the dialect, in the language that they are comfortable. That was one of our discoveries.*

Then, I'm sorry, if my memory would still serve me right, the first questionnaire was longer, definitely longer than it should hold the interviewee. It's like he was already fidgeting, that he has to go, so we have to—

GAINER: Were there other adjustments? Since you had to cut it down, did you have to prioritize questions or anything like that?

ESBER: *Yes. There were some questions that, instead of being asked first, we had to strategize as to when should this question come in. This should serve as a validation or as a follow up for something. So we had to rearrange also the questions as to first, second, third to support this question.*

GAINER: That is something that is very interesting. Do you remember some of the specific rearrangements that you made?

ESBER: For example, the question on the name or some other personal circumstance. Instead of asking that at the start of the interview, we decided to ask that at the end of the interview. Then there is this question on—I don't have a copy of the questionnaire...

Because there were some redundant questions; with the first question, you would already know whether you were given the receipt or not, and then it was repeated, so we had to drop that. Some sort of question like that.

GAINER: After the fifty-agency pilot I understand it went to a larger number of agencies, but not quite the number that is being surveyed today. So were there things that you encountered when you started to scale up that were difficult to do or to manage that you didn't observe in the pilot?

ESBER: Now in choosing the agencies, resources are always a challenge. [As] much as we would like to conduct this many, the lack of resources would limit us. So we had to prioritize agencies and in prioritizing, that is why we would have to first do most complained [about], high density, high volume agencies. How do we do know that this has the most complaints, are we going to conduct another research? But then we already have the Public Assistance and Information Office, we have the CSC hotline, and the Contact Center ng Bayan (CCB), which enabled us to identify which of these agencies have the most complaints. So we use those data.

GAINER: I understand that CCB started after—.

ESBER: After.

GAINER: —the first surveys.

ESBER: But during the first [surveys], we based that on the CSC hotline, the CSC text message because that has been in existence for a long time.

GAINER: So since the initial round it has been most complained agencies, but just with different data. Why did you choose that as the metric for who to select?

ESBER: Why the most complained?

GAINER: Yes, why the most complained. There were other ways that you could have chosen.

ESBER: Most complained and at the same time high volume. We would like to address those already that are problematic. So if we know that this is indeed the most complained, and sometimes the data that we are getting is that they are the most complained, but we cannot really zero in [on] what it is that they are complaining about. The survey would give us a more solid, a more scientific basis as to the complaints.

GAINER: So it is ones where you need to identify something is wrong, but we're not sure what.

ESBER: Yes.

GAINER: Since you had to prioritize, how did you also choose the agencies to start with when you were doing the initial round?

ESBER: We also based some of our list—there were 120 agencies or LGs that were involved because the Philippines was already into a project on identifying the business processing. The BPLO (Business Permit and Licensing Office). So

we also had to consider that in choosing the agencies that would be initially surveyed. Plus we also already knew that the GSIS was a challenge, the Government Service Insurance System, so these were already included. Plus there was already an Administrative Order from the (Malacañang) Palace that these are the agencies that need to be—.

GAINER: Right, the priority agencies.

ESBER: *Yes. We were able to identify those. We had an Administrative Order. We have a copy of that.*

GAINER: Right.

ESBER: *The ARTA PMO has a copy.*

GAINER: So initially, it was a focus on some of the business processing-related agencies. And then—.

ESBER: *The priority agencies.*

GAINER: The priority ones set at the highest level. Then, from there expanding to high volume and the ones with the most complaints from either the CSC hotline or later the CCB. OK, it is good to get that straight, because it sounds like it has evolved a bit.

The selection has changed sometimes and maybe one agency is most complained one year and fewer complaints the next. Do you come back to agencies and survey them again, year after year, or does who is being surveyed change a lot?

ESBER: *There were agencies that were already surveyed but we have to resurvey them, because they continue to be priority agencies, meaning there is not much improvement. We still need to go back to them. Also, when it comes to the conduct of the ARTA Report Card Survey, it is on us that if the agency feels we need to do technical assistance through the SDEP, and then after the SDEP it is on us that we do the second survey to find out whether there has been improvement.*

GAINER: So if they fail they are automatically in the RCS for the next year?

ESBER: *Yes, yes, it is automatic. We conduct the technical assistance to help and then survey again.*

GAINER: So is that fail at an agency level or is that the individual office?

ESBER: *Individual service office.*

GAINER: How do you get individual offices or whole agencies to then use the findings from the RCS to make their service better?

ESBER: *When we research—say for example one office, I am able to gauge the level of commitment or the level of trying of the head of the agency to improve services. Because there are some agencies like, especially the PhilHealth Corporation (Philippine Health Insurance Corporation Central Office), the Land Bank, the DBP (Development Bank of the Philippines), even before the conduct of the survey, they would seek an audience with me. "We would like to find out in what way we could improve more like this and like that, because it is not only after the survey but we really would like to know, to hear what our clients are saying." So that is one. We are able to get that.*

GAINER: It sounds like there are some agencies that already know they want to use this.

ESBER: *Okay, so how do we get them to get the results? When we discuss the results, we make it a point like—say for example we surveyed the GSIS. It is with the highest [position], like the President of GSIS or the Chief Executive Officer or the Secretary of the DOH (Department of Health) or the Chief Executive Officer of the [Indecipherable]. They are going to really go into the results. Aside from that, they are not only content to read the results, they would like to get the research because they would like to know what each and every client said.*

And we were already able to see some improvements. Like in my case, in the regional office, when I talk to the head of the agency, if we say that the space is cramped, there are some heads of office who would really—let's say for example if the contract is about to end, they would transfer to a bigger place because they really pay attention to what their clients are saying.

GAINER: So it sounds like there are some who are very motivated; you just give them a suggestion and they run with it.

ESBER: *Actually no, it is not because it is the Civil Service Commission who gives the suggestion. I would like to think that if you are able to show them the facts, the proof, that this is what your clients have said, it is listening to what the people have said. We were just used as instruments.*

GAINER: But are there times when people maybe aren't quite as interested in responding to the feedback?

ESBER: *Yes. I told you earlier that we make it a point to publish. There are some agencies, agency heads who are lukewarm. They are not as excited over the survey; they don't share the excitement of some or the excitement of the Civil Service Commission. But when you get to publish the results of the survey, like the 1000 agencies surveyed, and you classify them like, "these are the excellent agencies, these are the good [agencies], these are the failed [agencies]," they would like to change the results of the failed.*

GAINER: I know you give the grades at office level. How do you aggregate it to give an agency?

ESBER: *When we give the results it is not the aggregated offices; we give it per service office, per branch.*

GAINER: So then how do you—an agency has maybe some excellent, a few failed, some good. Do you combine that to give a rating for an agency itself?

ESBER: *I guess it was in the year 2012 or 2013—I'm not so sure anymore. We used to get the national rating, the national rating of the Customs, the Bureau of Customs, or the Bureau of Internal Revenue, we were able to get that. But then at the same time we also have a rating for each individual service office. There are some agencies—they are within the agency, we are also able to connect this also. We have the Strategic Performance Management System. The Civil Service Commission is also in charge of that.*

When you measure performance of the office, and then each and every delivery unit. We also use this in measuring the performance so that you will get a performance-based bonus. There are some agencies who require also,

or who would consider the results of the ARTA survey in assessing their own service office.

GAINER: Right, so I understand with the performance-based bonus system, the amount you get depends in part on your own individual performance, but it is also based on the overall performance of the office you work in. How do you get agencies to incorporate their scores from the RCS into the performance criteria?

ESBER: *When it comes to incorporating the score of the RCS, they would get the exact rating. Say for example this service office, BAR service office one, is rated 85, BAR service office two is rated a 70. They have their own competition so that the agency is able to factor in the rating of the ARTA. So they have their individual. When it comes to the performance-based bonus the head of agency is given the—well, generally, the DBM has standards. They are also given the discretion or the leeway to the other agency as to what factors or what considerations would they like to add in ranking their own delivery units. So that the head of the BAR would come up with their own: "What else would I measure?" In some agencies they consider the results of the RCS.*

GAINER: Does the CSC do anything to encourage more agencies to adopt that?

ESBER: *Yes we do. Actually, it is not only the CSC who is encouraging this, the guidelines of the PBB (Performance Based Bonus) is very explicit in saying the good governance conditions and one of these is the ARTA should be met.*

GAINER: Right. From my understanding at least, the Citizen's Charter is the mandatory part for the good governance conditions, but then agencies can choose whether to add the rating of their office as well.

ESBER: *Yes, it is at their discretion. I would like to give credit to the chairman of the Civil Service Commission, because when we were discussing—I happened to be part of the technical working group when I was here, when I was still in the central office. When we were discussing the conditions or the guidance of the PBB, it was through the efforts of the CSC. We were strong in suggesting that the Anti-Red-Tape condition or the Citizen's Charter condition should be included so that it became [as] a part of the conditions.*

Now we continued also to make suggestions because as of now we are focusing on the Strategic Performance Management System, and when we do our technical assistance with the other agencies we encourage them, "Why don't you consider this because this is a scientific measure that will really help you in gauging the performance of your offices?" because it is not only you who is assessing, but it is already the clients who are giving you the evaluation.

GAINER: So do you have an estimate of how many agencies have adopted that so far?

ESBER: *How many agencies have adopted what? The Anti-Red-Tape Act, the survey?*

GAINER: The survey into their performance management.

ESBER: *The government, the GOCCs (Government-Owned and/or Controlled Corporations). Especially the banks, because they have their own incentives and rewards, and they have the means also.*

GAINER: That was something I wanted to ask about. It sounds like there is some variation in the compliance and the performance on the survey. Do you have any explanation for why some agencies may be performing better overall on their Report Card Survey than others?

ESBER: *It is a reality that the GOCCs, specifically the banks that we have surveyed, they do more. Why? Because when it comes to the structure, they really have the funds; they have air-conditioned waiting lounges, they could come up with computerized services. They can afford this, unlike those agencies who could only offer manual [services] or whose spaces are so cramped. But then later on it matters. But the Filipinos as clients, we still value relationship; if you have smiles, even if it's hot, at the end of the day, the relationship, the friendliness, the walking of the extra mile, the courtesy, being considerate, this gives much of the rating. Because when they rate—it also carries a weight. In fact, I would say that that was one of the biggest factors that helped us originally. The friendliness. You really have to make the client feel that you are exerting all that effort. You would like to help him; you would do anything and everything to deliver the goods or deliver the license or whatever image at the end. It's much more.*

GAINER: So what do you think are the main factors that motivate people in an individual office or the head of an agency to make compliance with ARTA a priority?

ESBER: *To make compliance with ARTA a priority first would be leadership. It is important to see the leader being committed to knowing how the delivery of the office or the agency is—how efficient, how effective, how ethical—and then being able to communicate this to each and every employee of the organization, and then the sincerity also to listen and to consider the clients, what they are saying. Because it is not enough that we get their feedback, what is more important is to make them feel and to let them know that we are doing something from the feedback that we gathered.*

So it is educating also the client. We continue to do this, although we have difficulty considering how do we educate the clients. But we do ARTA Watch. You have heard of the ARTA Watch?

GAINER: Yes.

ESBER: *What are the innovations? First we conduct the ARTA Watch and then we educate the government employees. Then we said, "Hey, we shouldn't be educating their employees only." So when there are clients gathered there, we invite them, we educate them. We tell them that you have a hand—you have a big weight in making a difference in the delivery of services of government agencies. So we continue to educate them. We continue to partner with the media because definitely the media is very powerful.*

We tell them that you help us in telling the clients, in telling the [Indecipherable] they should—not to say no to the interview because it is an opportunity for them.

GAINER: So how did you form those partnerships with the media to help communicate to people the importance?

ESBER: *First is we have to practice open-door policy. Whenever the media comes, I drop anything that I do, just to show that they are important. I always ask them, help us communicate this. Also when we have something new about our programs, and one of them is ARTA, we ask them to help us.*

GAINER: So at the regional office level or at the central office level, there is an effort to reach out to the media and ask them to—?

ESBER: Yes.

GAINER: And are they generally receptive to covering these types of things?

ESBER: *They are, they are generally receptive. But you see the one thing that I also observed, especially when they know that there are failed agencies, sometimes they are interested and then I always tell them, "Please, yes I know that we should inform them, that they have a right to know who are the failed [agencies], but could we focus also on those who did well. So balance, let's tell them who did well, who were excellent. Let's also tell them. Because our commitment also to the agencies is we do not divulge anything unless we have talked to the agency. That is very important. We will not get the results of the ARTA from anyone else except the Civil Service Commission.*

GAINER: Has how you have engaged with agencies, communicated to them, changed over time? Have you found that there are things that you needed to emphasize more as you've gone through the process?

ESBER: *It is a priority now. In my case, for those sensitive agencies, I would be the one, I would find time to discuss it with them. Although the discussion of the report of findings, ROF, they are delegated to the provincial directors. There are times when I feel that I have to be there to discuss it myself, I need to do the commitment, I need to strike a partnership and assure them that the CSC will help them. But my personal standard is that when I am the one giving the results or discussing the results or striking the partnership, my standard is that we deliver excellence not just asking.*

GAINER: So complying with this and really delivering excellent service does require some changes among the staff and that can be challenging.

ESBER: Yes.

GAINER: So during the course of ARTA implementation have you found any things that were especially difficult for people to comply or areas where it was maybe not so difficult to comply itself but difficult to persuade people?

ESBER: *The difficulty I mentioned already on not being open yet to being audited. Why [would] they need to? Most agencies would think that we are well, we are okay, we know our mandate, we know that we can deliver. Is there a need for an agency to interview our clients and find out how well we are doing or how we are doing? So it is difficult. That is why we needed to partner with them. It is not actually assessing or just gauging because we would like to find out, but at the end of the day, it is really helping each other so that we are able to deliver the excellent service that the public deserves.*

We have no choice, considering that we are in public service. Our mandate is really to deliver excellence. We are not a profit oriented-organization. It is excellence that is our mandate.

GAINER: I know that that was something you had to work on in the beginning. Has that continued over time or has it decreased; have you noticed any changes?

ESBER: *You have to continue the partnership. I realized that when I was already in the field. When I was in the operations already, when I started in operations, that is where you see the value of partnering with other heads of agencies. Because it is a different thing when people comply because that's what the*

law says, but it is also a different thing when people comply because they feel that they have a hand in it, that they can change the landscape of the public service delivery. So it is a continuous partnership.

GAINER: Have you encountered a situation where you really had to make some sort of big push to sustain a partnership once it is established?

ESBER: *Yes, because there were some agencies who would have liked to be—let's say for example that the Civil Service Commission, every year we target agencies. Before we target the agency—let's say for example, for 2015, we will have a conference that would say that these are the target agencies, so that we know already. There are some targeted agencies who would say, "Please, not now, not this year, not this month, not this semester." And we have to tell them why? Why not this semester? Why not this year? "You see we have these problems on this." Okay, but there is something that we could help you in, let's plan. How long will it take so that by this month—*

Some agencies would say OK, we're ready, OK. Then they will sit down with you and [say] we're going to do this week. But there are also some agencies that would say yes, and then you have to tell that that really they have to do this.

GAINER: So because the target agencies change from year to year, sometimes you really have to go through that process all over again. It sounds like it could be a lot of work.

ESBER: Yes.

GAINER: I understand that, in addition to the survey and the ratings that come out of this, there are other mechanisms to encourage compliance. Maybe encourage is not the right word because, if they don't, they can be held administratively liable. So how is that coordinated?

ESBER: *How do we encourage compliance?*

GAINER: I'm sorry, I was referring to outside of the ratings and the publishing. Are there mechanisms to coordinate that with the administrative penalties that the law provides for not complying?

ESBER: *In other words, you would use the stick.*

GAINER: How do you balance the stick and the carrot?

ESBER: *We are more on the carrot, because we still have to see agencies that are being charged, let's say for example, for noncompliance with the Citizen's Charter, or we were toying with the idea that if this agency would fail this how many times, is it already a ground for the filing of charge—we are still looking at that, we haven't come up yet with definite ways of dealing [with this]. But we are more particular. We already have clear standards in sustaining because we do, we are focusing on the carrot, on the rewards. We are strong on that.*

GAINER: Why did you decide that you wanted to place the emphasis on the carrot?

ESBER: *Why? Because there are many—if you're going to look at the laws, at the [Indecipherable] of the Philippines, there are many punitive [ones]. The liquidation of cash advance required by the commission and audit, it has been a requirement for quite a long time, correct? But there are still many violators. There are many not complying with this. But when we included that*

as one of the good governance conditions, people were complying because there is a reward if you comply. So if that is the mentality or if that is the side that you would like to develop, and it is working, then we might ask why not also use that when it comes to the implementation of the Anti-Red Tape law. If you comply with the Citizen's Charter, then there is a reward for it.

GAINER: So people respond better to the carrot.

ESBER: Yes.

GAINER: I understand there are a lot of agencies that you have to survey, and you mentioned that you have to reach a partnership with the DILG to get them to cover the LGUs (Local Government Units) because there are so many. When you were deciding on that partnership, what was the decision process and what did you have to teach the DILG?

ESBER: *The decision process, one of the things that we considered is, indeed, the Civil Service Commission needs to share this because we cannot do it all by ourselves. We also believed that when it comes to the principle of good governance, we have to share this with other oversight agencies, and DILG is one of them. It is one of the oversight agencies when it comes to the LGUs. So we also partnered with them. We have a Memorandum of Understanding, and then we trained.*

The training arm of the DILG is the Local Government Academy, the LGA. We trained the LGA so that they could also train their own researchers who did this. Then we not only did this nationally, per region, per cluster, the Visayas cluster, the Mindanao cluster, or in some, if the region is too big, we also did the training. Including not only the training, not only the conduct of the survey, but including also the scoring and the program.

GAINER: So did you teach them to use pretty much exactly the same methods—?

ESBER: Yes.

GAINER: —that you use? From what you have maybe observed over the course of their implementation, have there been ways that it differed, or has it pretty much been consistent with what the CSC does?

ESBER: *Were you able to ask this already?*

GAINER: I'm interested in hearing a range of perspectives.

ESBER: *The DILG made use also of the ARTA or of the Report Card Survey. If the DBM, you were able to partner and it was used as one of the good governance conditions, the DILG used the results of the Report Card Survey in identifying their Seal of Good Housekeeping. You've heard of this, you're familiar with this. They have the bronze, silver, and gold for certain factors.*

We are supposed to have a dialogue with them because we also need to monitor or to find out—because after transferring, rather or sharing the technology, I am not so sure if we were able to come up with an opportunity wherein we discussed, like DILG, what were your experiences. We need to do that so that we would know also like what were the difficulties and the challenges they were experiencing, if there were instances that they deviated from the conduct of the survey, why, and in what way have they deviated.

So we have to do a thorough discussion on this, because at this point I cannot outright say that there are—there may be some informal feedback, but we need also data to support it; indeed, there were divisions.

GAINER: So that is something in progress. Do they also publish their results in the same way?

ESBER: *I don't think—because the way the Civil Service Commission does it, we publish it in [Indecipherable].*

GAINER: Right.

ESBER: *I'm not sure if the DILG—but in my region, it is within my control, so what I do is on December 4th the Chairman of the Civil Service Commission will be awarding the CSC Seal of Excellence in the region. We have twelve agencies, twelve service offices which qualify and [the] thirteenth could be our regional office. So we're going to do that. It is a one-day affair, I guess in the morning, I'm not so sure of the program, if [it is] in the afternoon or in the morning. We have asked the DILG to present the results of the survey they have conducted in Region 8 so that we will be able to see what were or how were the surveys in Region 8 plus [Indecipherable].*

GAINER: Okay, so it is something coordinated at the regional level then.

ESBER: Yes.

GAINER: Since you've been now at both sides of this, were there things that you encountered at the regional level that you might not have expected in terms of implementation when you were planning things from this office?

ESBER: *When it comes to the implementation, I have no problem. We have all the regions. That would include my region. We are compliant with the manual. We have one manual we're looking at, so it is standardized. It is conducted in the same manner, the scoring, the program that we use. I guess the difference would be on the quality of the researchers. Truly there are some researchers who are more professional or who are better, although I cannot pinpoint the specific region [about] which I would say that the researchers there are not as good as the researchers in my region. But I would still say that there would be some difference.*

GAINER: Have you encountered any sort of unexpected challenges during your time working on ARTA? I know a lot of it is probably—you can anticipate. But were there things that surprised you?

ESBER: *Yes. There is this thing, just before I came to Manila, I had a talk with one of the agencies. There is only one agency that failed in Region 8, and as I told you earlier, it is really sensitive, and I feel that my personal presence is important. So I made it a point to talk to the head, to the regional director, because the problem that was being given to me was that the director has a problem in coordinating with the central office. So definitely that is beyond me. I cannot do a streamlining on that or a training for the front-line service because he has [issues] in coordination, in getting the approval of his superior.*

But I would like to think that the problem solved itself, because there was a change of management. There was a change in top management so that when I went there this guy was already telling [us] that it's solved. They were able to transfer to a bigger place. So you see when things like that happen, it is beyond my control. At first it was "How do I do this, I cannot go directly to

the central office It is beyond me, because my jurisdiction is within the [region]." So sometimes, just talking to the director would help, just an opportunity for him to air whatever his problem was.

GAINER: I know we're running a little short on time and you have to get to another appointment, so just two final questions. Looking at implementation so far, are there lessons that you think you've learned from this that maybe if you were to advise someone who is interested in implementing this kind of program, you would advise them to do the same or differently from what you've done?

ESBER: *When it comes to implementing this program, my advice would be to come up with a long-term plan. When we implemented the ARTA, I have to be very honest, the long-term plan there was—it comes only to the number of target agencies, because we already have a balanced scorecard. So it was long-term in the sense that, until 2015, we know what we are targeting. We know what is the percentage of passing for each of the years, and we started that last year, no, in 2013. But what I would like to see would be doing a more thorough planning of the ARTA and maybe involving other agencies who could help us.*

GAINER: What are some of the things that you think should be included in that kind of long-term plan?

ESBER: *When it comes to resources, the money, we really need more budget. Then to involve more—because when we involved the CSOs, I mean it cannot be forever. We rely on the good heart of other people; they need also some resources, so what do they get, how are they rewarded for their contributions to the private sector training and the public sector in the implementation. We need the resources for it.*

GAINER: Overall, what is your assessment of what have been the strengths and weaknesses or the most effective areas of implementation so far and the areas where there is room for improvement?

ESBER: *The implementation would be on the integrity, on the integrity of the conduct of the Report Card Survey. So the quality of the researchers. Even in identifying the service offices, I would like to think that we made good of them. When we conduct [the surveys], we also do a review, an annual review, a regular review of the questionnaire. What I would like to do next—When we do the survey we only include doing a review of the survey questionnaire. I am toying with the idea of involving also the clients on the questions that should be asked. How do you see that? Why don't we involve the clients themselves when it comes to questions wherein they will be more comfortable, more open? We haven't tried that.*

It is the Civil Service Commission, at first in cooperation with the DAP, who crafted the survey questionnaire. But this time we would like to involve the citizens in crafting the questionnaire, because—by the way I forgot to tell you, when we handhold agencies in reviewing their Citizen's Charter because at this time, every two years, what we are looking at is it will not only be the agency who will review the charter. There should always be the presence of the clients. They should be there to tell us, "Hey, three hours securing, getting the license is too long for us, why don't you do it in one hour? Why don't you scrap this particular requirement." Because it shouldn't always be the agency doing all that; let the clients speak.

GAINER: Has that happened in the review process since you've been involved?

ESBER: The Citizen's Charter, it is hard because—let's say for example, we have reviewed the Citizen's Charter. We will ask that agency, "OK, who are your identified clients?" For example, if it is the LTFRB (Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board), there are associations of the motor/car vehicles. Could we get representatives, and then we present to them that this is the Citizen's Charter of the Land Transportation: how do they find the charter?

It has been included in the changes that we would like to do when we review the Charter.

GAINER: OK, but so far in any reviews that have happened, that hasn't been a part yet?

ESBER: It has been done. It has been done in—the ARTA PMO would have data on that, because it is already included in the plans, that we are going to involve the citizens when they craft the Citizen's Charter. Because citizens, they should be involved.

GAINER: It seems like a large part of this is getting the citizens to believe that this is a tool for them, something that they can value. What is your advice on how you can persuade people of that?

ESBER: My advice is that for the government to inform our clients, to continue telling them, to continue disseminating the information that we have the Report Card Survey, and then they conduct that Report Card Survey. We encourage people to participate because that is an opportunity for them to help the government in improving the delivery of front-line services and in getting excellent service. So it is a partnership between the clients and the agency. So we need to do more of that.

Where we scored low, where does the government, or where does the agency scored low? If they are asked the question, "Is this the first time you heard of the Citizen's Charter?" They would say, "Yes, this is the first time." So that is alarming. Because the Citizen's Charter has been there since 2008, and why is it that this would only be the first time that you hear about it? So it is a message for us that we need to do more on information dissemination, on communicating so that we get the clients' engaged with us. That is why we need to partner with the media.

GAINER: With the media.

ESBER: Yes.

GAINER: Great, thank you so, so much.