

# Rio Grande do Sul State Government



**Subject:  
"Career Reform"**

## ***EXECUTIVE SUMMARY***

**Porto Alegre – August 2009**



# **1<sup>st</sup> Deliberative Poll in Rio Grande do Sul State**

**Subject: “Valorization of public servants’ career”**

## ***First Deliberative Poll Shows Support for Career Reforms in Rio Grande do Sul***

### **Informed Opinions about Criteria for Promotion and Effective Policy**

Results of the he first Deliberative Poll in Latin America were presented by the state government of Rio Grande do Sol at a briefing August, 25, 2009. Those results will inform the government’s legislative proposals. The Deliberative Poll, held June 5-7, 2009 in Porto Alegre gathered a scientific microcosm of the entire state of Rio Grande do Sul for a weekend of small group discussions and dialogue with competing policy experts. At the end, they filled out the same confidential questionnaire as when first contacted.

The participants deliberated about the difficult issue of career reform in the civil service. They moved away from “years in service” as a criterion for promotion and compensation. After considering arguments for and against different proposals, a number had strong majority support at the end of the process.

### **Sampling and Recruitment**

The survey firm Methodus interviewed a random (area probability) sample of 1,651 adult (eighteen years-old or older) residents of Rio Grande do Sul, with quotas at the household level for gender, age, education, and income. Of these, 236 attended the deliberative weekend, and 226 of them completed the post event questionnaire. We refer to these 226 as “participants;” and the remaining 1,425—who were interviewed but did not attend (or in 10 cases attended but did not complete the post-even questionnaire)—as “nonparticipants.”

### **Representativeness**

The participants were a good, representative sample of the state’s adult (eighteen-years-old or older) population. One way of judging that is to compare the participants with the

nonparticipants. On most demographic characteristics and virtually all pre-deliberation policy attitudes, the differences are slight.

For example, the participants averaged less than a year older than the nonparticipants (40.6 years versus 39.7 years), and included slightly less than 1% less men (46.5% versus 47.2%). These are minor and statistically “insignificant” differences—and it is the figure for the participants that is the more accurate, indeed almost exactly right according to census data, which have the percentage of men at 48.9%. The percentages in each category of educational attainment—“less than primary school,” “finished primary school,” “incomplete high school,” “finished high school,” “incomplete college,” and “finished college,”—are similar, differing primarily between in the “less than primary school” and “finished college” categories, that is participants are slightly more educated.

The same is true of household income. In every category—“less than R\$ 930,” “R\$ 931 - R\$ 2235,” “R\$ 2236 - R\$ 4650,” “R\$ 4651 - R\$ 6300,” and “more than R\$ 6301,”—the difference between participants and nonparticipants is small. The average difference is about 3 percent, and the largest is under 4%. The differences with respect to number of children and employment status are similar, with 2% more of the non-participants having no children and roughly 2% less of them working full time).

The one respect in which the sample is noticeably off makes it conservative, in the sense of ensuring that public sector employee concerns were fully taken into account. Public sector employees are considerably *overrepresented* in the interview sample as a whole. The percentage of active public sector employees at all levels—federal, state, and municipal—is 18.4% among the participants and 13.5% among the nonparticipants but only approximately 4.5% among state’s adult population. So public sector employees are overrepresented among both the participants and the nonparticipants but less overrepresented among the participants. The percentage of active *state* public sector employees, also higher among both participants and nonparticipants than in the state population (where it is just over 2%), is marginally higher among the participants than the nonparticipants (6.2% versus 4.9%). Here public sector employees are more overrepresented among the participants than the nonparticipants.

### **Criteria for Pay and Promotion**

The percentage thinking “years in service” was important in awarding pay increases began at 66% before deliberation but dropped to 49% by the end of the weekend. When asked to weigh “years in service” versus “productivity” as the basis for promotion, the percentage believing productivity should be the basis increased from an already high level of 69% before deliberation to 71% afterwards. Both before and after deliberations, productivity was

thought to be important for promotion by an overwhelming majority (92% at the end of the deliberations).

The participants expressed strong majority support both before and after for a number of ways to evaluate civil servants. Factors listed below were considered important criteria to support decisions regarding wage increases for public servants. These all started high but did not change significantly in the process:

- "team performance" (78% support at the end of deliberations)
- "individual performance" (80%)
- "education level" (83%)
- "job related awards" (72%)
- "professional training" (90%)
- "external evaluation" (77%)

Factors listed below were considered important criteria to support decisions regarding promotion of public servants:

- "attendance" (82%)
- "being proactive" (93%)
- "professional training and development" (95%)
- "community involvement" (74%)
- "education level" (82%)
- "external evaluation" (71%)
- "exam qualifications" (83%)
- "punctuality" (94%)

These opinions, all with more than 70% majorities after deliberation, reflect what the people are willing to support after they have considered the arguments on either side.

Some criteria for promotion went down significantly, although they maintained bare majority support. Support for "evaluations by co workers" went down from 72% to 52% and support for "evaluations by subordinates" went down from 71% to 51%. Similarly, support for "self-evaluations" as a criterion went down from 81% to 61%. After deliberation, the respondents appeared to prefer reliance on objective criteria for promotion whenever possible.

### **What would be Effective?**

Participants were also asked a series of questions about what measures would be effective in increasing the productivity of civil servants. "Requiring more years in service for promotion" dropped from 47% before deliberation to only 35% after. Support for the effectiveness of a number of measures stayed high both before and after:

- “bonuses based on performance” (78% after deliberation),
- “bonuses based on acquiring relevant job skills” (77,5%),
- “promotions based on performance” (86%),
- “penalties for poor performance” (56%),
- “exams to measure qualifications for promotion” (83%).

Support for some specific measures went down, while still maintaining majority support:

- “Increasing the number of job titles” went from 86% before deliberation to 63% after
- “Recognition for good performance” went from 96% before deliberation to 84% after
- “Regular evaluations by supervisors” went from 79% before deliberation to 68% after.

About the overall number of civil servants, participants were asked to choose between “hiring as many as possible regardless of productivity” and hiring “as few as possible with high productivity.” After deliberation support for the latter position was 74% (increasing from 70%). Both before and after, there was a majority support for the proposition that civil servants should be “penalized for poor performance regardless of how long they have served” (55% and 60%). Support for the contrasting notion that “long-serving civil servants should not be penalized for poor performance” was only 19% after deliberation.

## **Knowledge**

The participants learned a lot from the process about the policy issues. They were asked knowledge questions before and after. They were asked about the revenues of the state government, the fiscal responsibility act in 2001, the composition of the work force, the retirement policies. Some of the knowledge gains were large (for example the percentage knowing the percentage of the work force in Education, Health and Safety increased from 14% to 50%). Overall, the knowledge index of five questions increased from 19% getting the questions correct before deliberation to 32% getting them correct afterwards.

## **Attitudes toward the State Government**

Before deliberation 44% of the participants thought that the “the State Government of Rio Grande do Sul can be trusted to do the right thing” only “less than half the time.” This level of mistrust fell to 32% after deliberation. Before deliberation 64% thought that “the state Government of Rio Grande do Sul cares what people like me think” only “less than half of the time.” After deliberation this level of mistrust fell to 34%.

## **Evaluations of the Event**

The participants greatly enjoyed and appreciated the experience of participating in the deliberative weekend. Asked to rate the event as a whole on a 0-10 scale from a “waste of time” (0) to “extremely valuable” (10), 84.8% considered it valuable (rating it above 5), and 53.6% gave it a perfect 10. Only 3.6% considered it less than valuable (rating it below 5).

The small group discussions, talking with other participants outside the small group discussions, and the plenary sessions with the panels of experts received similarly high marks. The small group discussions were considered valuable by 94.7% and given a perfect 10 by 67.1%, talking with other participants outside the small group discussions was considered valuable by 93.3% and given a perfect 10 by 61.3%, and the plenary sessions were considered valuable by 88.0% and given a perfect 10 by 56.0%.

The participants saw the process as balanced and thorough. 93.8% agreed that their small group moderator “provided the opportunity for everyone to participate in the discussion.” 80.4% *disagreed* that their small group moderator “sometimes tried to influence the group with his or her own views.” 92.0% agreed that “the important aspects of the issues were covered in the group discussions.” The briefing material received somewhat lower but still fairly high marks. 57.0% described it as “mostly balanced,” while 35.6% thought that it “clearly favored some positions over others.”

Finally, the participants greatly appreciated the opportunity of getting to know their fellow participants, coming from all across the state and from all walks of life. 90.6% agreed that “I learned a lot about people very different from me - about what they and their lives are like.”

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**Prepared by:**

**Rio Grande do Sul State Government  
Secretary-General**

**Technical Overview:**

***Center for Deliberative Democracy*  
Prof. James Fishkin, Ph.D.  
Prof. Robert Luskin, Ph.D.  
Alice Siu, Ph.D.  
Stanford University**

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