

Evaluation Method: Surveys

HOW-TO-GUIDE

Purpose of Surveys:

- To quickly gather data, input, or feedback from many people. Surveys can be used for identifying needs prior to effort or evaluation during and after efforts.
- To be able to easily analyze and compare responses of individuals or groups.

Survey's 8 Steps:

1. Decide what information you want to collect.

What do you want to learn?

Whether the survey is for identifying needs or evaluating what you have done, it's important to narrow down all the possible information you want to know. What is most important to you? What will help you move forward? What will help you know if your efforts have been successful?

2. Define who you plan to survey.

Who has the information you want to learn?

Think about the information you want to collect. Whose input or feedback do you most need? The answer to that question tells you a lot about how to design your questions and what tool(s) to use for gathering data.

EXAMPLE: To gather feedback from elementary-age youth about a program you led, survey questions must be simple and can only offer a few basic responses so they can easily understand and answer. A paper survey may be best. On the other hand, to gather ideas from government officials and community members about a complex issue, an online survey with a few specific questions, including some open-ended ones, may be most appropriate.

3. Develop the questions you want to ask.

Based on what you want to know, what is the best way to ask the question?

Questions should be clear and short, only asking about one thing at a time (no combined questions). Each question should be written as simply as possible so they can be easily understood. Use a variety of question types (yes/no, multiple choice, open-ended, etc.) to keep it interesting and get the information you need, but keep in mind that open-ended questions are more difficult and time-consuming to analyze.

4. Determine the best order of the questions.

Start with more general questions. Then move into more specific questions.

5. Choose one or more survey tools.

What type of survey tool will be easiest and most convenient for your participants? For you?

Survey tools to consider include paper or online. You may also consider talking to participants and writing down (or entering online) their responses. In some situations, it may be necessary to use multiple tools to reach all participants.

6. Decide how to distribute the survey.

How will you inform and invite people to take the survey? How much time do they have to respond?

In the simplest form, you can hand the survey to someone you want to fill it out and they will complete it right away. In many other situations, you must decide how to promote the survey – through social media, phone calls, group text messaging, special events, mail, or other means. Make sure participants know how long they have to respond.

7. Implement the survey.

Now that your survey is ready, promote it and gather the input or feedback you need.

8. Analyze the results.

What do the results tell you?

If you used one of the online survey tools below, the site will give you a basic report. Now look deeper. Read through the data. Discuss what it means to you. Does it tell you what you wanted to learn (see your list from Step 1 above)? Do the results raise any new questions for you? Is there any additional information you want to gather?

Suggested Survey Tools

Many online survey tools exist. Here are a few recommended tools:

- Google Forms: <https://www.google.com/forms/about/> - Google Forms are easy to use, easy to share, and produce a report that makes it simple to look at both individual and compiled data.
- SurveyMonkey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/> - SurveyMonkey is an easy-to-use, free survey platform that allows you to create and personalize surveys. It also has a report function so you can view your data quickly.
- Qualtrics: <https://www.qualtrics.com/> - Qualtrics is a powerful and flexible survey tool. Extension Educators can help youth use the tool to develop in-depth surveys and questionnaires.
- Facebook or Twitter – If you only have one or two simple questions to ask, some social media platforms have a basic polling function. Think about your audience to decide if this would be an effective way to gather the input you need.

Parts of a Survey

Surveys have a few basic parts to include. Use the following as a checklist to include all the parts.

- Write a short introduction at the beginning of the survey:
 - Describe the purpose of the survey.
 - Explain how you will use the data.
 - Tell participants if the survey is anonymous or not.
 - Provide a name and phone or email in case participants have questions or concerns.
- Enter the questions you developed.
- Thank participants at the end for sharing their input or feedback with you.

Additional Resources:

For more detailed information – including how to know if you are asking good questions, how to prepare a survey, and more – go to the [Youth Leading Community Change Evaluation Toolkit](#) and read pages 71-74.



The University of Wisconsin–Madison is an equal opportunity and affirmative action educator and employer.
© 2019 Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System.