

MLC-3 Webinar: Survey Design



Introduction and Purpose

- ❖ Surveys are a great way to collect information about the customers you serve and their opinions and needs.
- ❖ Our purpose today is to help you design and implement surveys that will help you get accurate and usable data for your programs.

Topics Covered

- ⊞ Developing a Plan
- ⊞ Developing a Survey
- ⊞ Distribution
- ⊞ Survey Exercise
- ⊞ Questions

Designing a Survey Plan

Create a Data Collection Plan

- ❖ A sound data collection plan includes:
 - ❖ Purpose for collecting the data
 - ❖ How you will collect the data
 - ❖ Who will provide the data
 - ❖ How individuals in charge of distribution will be trained to collect the data
 - ❖ What you will do with the data
 - ❖ How you will summarize and present the data

Data Collection Plan

❖ Start with a **specific goal** for your survey

❖ What do you want to learn?

❖ How do you want to use the information?

Data Collection Plan

- ⊞ How are you going to collect the data?
- ⊞ Early in the design process decide how you are going to distribute your survey.
 - ⊞ Mail?
 - ⊞ Internet?
 - ⊞ In person?
 - ⊞ Phone?
 - ⊞ Other?

Data Collection Plan

- ❖ Who will provide the data?
 - ❖ Define the population of interest
 - ❖ Appropriateness - Make sure these people will be able to tell you what you want to know
 - ❖ Representativeness - Make sure your sample represents the larger group of people you're interested in

Data Collection Plan

⊞ Training Plan for Data Collectors

- ⊞ Methodology for collecting the data should be **clear**
- ⊞ Train data collectors to be **consistent** in the data collection process

Data Collection Plan

- ❖ What will you do with the data?
 - ❖ Knowing how you will use data frames how you develop questions
- ❖ How will data be summarized and reported?
 - ❖ Knowing how you will present the data will help make sure you have the right questions and answer options in place

Developing a Survey Instrument

Introductory Text

⊞ What to include:

- ⊞ Goal or purpose of survey
- ⊞ Who is conducting the survey
- ⊞ Note that participation is valuable
- ⊞ No correct or incorrect responses
- ⊞ Confidentiality/Anonymity
- ⊞ Time estimate
- ⊞ Return instructions (repeat again at end)
- ⊞ Who to contact with questions or concerns (repeat again at end)

Introduction

⊞ Instructions

- ⊞ Provide instructions on how to complete the survey

 - ⊞ General instructions at the beginning

 - ⊞ Specific instructions with each question set

- ⊞ Make instructions:

 - ⊞ Short

 - ⊞ Specific

 - ⊞ Clear

Designing Your Questions

❖ Question Types

- ❖ Closed Ended Questions

- ❖ Open Ended Questions

Designing Your Questions

❖ Closed Ended Questions

- ❖ Provide a fixed list of responses and ask the respondent to select one or more as indicative of the best possible answer.

Designing Your Questions

❖ Closed Ended Questions

❖ Response Types

- ❖ Multiple choice – choose one
- ❖ Multiple choice – choose all that apply
- ❖ Likert Scale – rate on a scale
 - ❖ Neutral option considerations
- ❖ Rank order
 - ❖ No more than five is optimal

Designing Your Questions

❖ Closed Ended Questions

❖ Benefits

- ❖ Uniform response choice facilitate comparisons
- ❖ Can clarify the question you are asking
- ❖ Can remind respondents of alternatives that they otherwise wouldn't consider or had forgotten
- ❖ Limits extraneous and irrelevant responses

Designing Your Questions

⊞ Closed Ended Questions

⊞ Benefits

- ⊞ Can increase comfort level of respondent when answering a sensitive question
 - ⊞ Provide response choices far beyond normally expected behavior, implying that an accurate response is not abnormal
 - ⊞ Ranges can help with this too (ex. Income ranges)
- ⊞ Easier to answer – picking a response is easier than constructing one
 - ⊞ Increases response rate!

Designing Your Questions

❖ Closed Ended Questions

❖ Disadvantages

- ❖ If no answer fits, respondent may randomly choose response
- ❖ If respondent doesn't understand the question or response choices, answer doesn't mean much
- ❖ Loss of subtle variations due to pre-selected categories
 - ❖ An "Other" choice can mitigate this, but use sparingly.
- ❖ Doesn't provide respondent with an opportunity to spontaneously contribute their ideas

Designing Your Questions

❖ Open Ended Questions

- ❖ Provide respondents the opportunity to freely respond to a question or statement.

Designing Your Questions

❖ Open Ended Questions

❖ Benefits

- ❖ Capture subtle variations in responses
- ❖ May capture surprising findings – things you didn't consider
- ❖ Generate ideas to explore further using more structured methods
- ❖ Allow respondents' voices to be heard

Designing Your Questions

❖ Open Ended Questions

❖ Disadvantages

- ❖ Can not be generalized beyond the respondent
- ❖ Some responses may be irrelevant or hard to interpret
- ❖ More time consuming and challenging to analyze
- ❖ Take more time to answer
- ❖ Harder to answer – require more thought and frequently skipped

What Makes a Good Survey Question

⊞ Evokes the truth

- ⊞ Questions should be as non-threatening as possible, especially the sensitive ones.
- ⊞ Be clear about anonymity or confidentiality of answers

What Makes a Good Survey Question

❖ Ask ONE question

- ❖ Avoid questions that use the word “and”

- ❖ Respondents will be unable to answer correctly/truthfully if their opinions about the two dimensions differ

- ❖ Bad Question Example:

- ❖ Were you satisfied with the quality of our food and service?

What Makes a Good Survey Question

⊞ Exhaustive

⊞ Response choices should accommodate all possible answers

⊞ An “other” option can be useful here

⊞ Bad Question Example:

⊞ What make of car do you drive?

⊞ Ford

⊞ GM

What Makes a Good Survey Question

☒ Mutually Exclusive

☒ If you're asking for one answer, make sure answer choices don't overlap.

☒ Bad Question Example:

☒ How would you classify the area where you live?

☒ City

☒ Country

☒ Farm

What Makes a Good Survey Question

❖ Produces a varied responses

❖ If everyone answers the question the same way, you may need to re-examine the question and response options to make sure they are producing useful information.

❖ Bad Question Example:

❖ What do you think of the service you received today?

❖ Best service ever

❖ Somewhere between the best and the worst

❖ Worst service ever

What Makes a Good Survey Question

- ⊞ Able to be answered by anyone

- ⊞ Your question should not make any unwarranted assumptions about respondents

- ⊞ Bad Question Example:

- ⊞ Are you satisfied with your current health insurance?

- ⊞ Yes

- ⊞ No

What Makes a Good Survey Question

❖ Not Leading

❖ A good question does not imply a desired answer

❖ Strive for neutrality

❖ Bad Question Example:

❖ Don't you think the fees for this service are too high?

What Makes a Good Survey Question

- ❖ Does not use words that are emotionally loaded or vague
 - ❖ Quantifying adjectives, like “most,” “least,” or “majority” mean different things to different people.
 - ❖ Bad Question Example:
 - ❖ Do most of the people in this community disagree with radical ideologies?

What Makes a Good Survey Question

- ❖ Avoids use of unfamiliar words or abbreviations
 - ❖ Use language that is appropriate for the audience – check reading level
 - ❖ Avoid jargon
 - ❖ Avoid abbreviations
 - ❖ Bad Question Example:
 - ❖ Does the LHD follow federal guidelines in providing services to WIC clients?

What Makes a Good Survey Question

- ⊞ Use skip patterns sparingly
 - ⊞ Especially important for paper surveys
 - ⊞ Skip patterns can be confusing
 - ⊞ People may ignore them or get frustrated
 - ⊞ Can sometimes be avoided

What Makes a Good Survey Question

- ⊕ Limit amount of choices for “rank order” response choices to five.
 - ⊕ If you feel you must use rank order response choices, keep the list short to avoid confusion

What Makes a Good Survey Question

- ❖ Questions flow logically

- ❖ Logical flow of questions makes surveys easier and faster to complete

Formatting Your Survey

⊞ Question Order

⊞ First question

- ⊞ Apply to all respondents
- ⊞ Easily understood
- ⊞ Easily answered
- ⊞ Interesting
- ⊞ Connect with the purpose of the survey
- ⊞ Not overly personal!

Formatting Your Survey

❖ Question Order

- ❖ Good ordering supports ease of answering

- ❖ Group by:

 - ❖ Content

 - ❖ Answer type

- ❖ Put sensitive/objectionable questions at or near the end

Formatting Your Survey

Survey Layout

- Keep it as short as is reasonable
- Consistent appearance throughout
- Avoid multiple columns or other confusing layouts
- Keep scales consistent
- Make questions appear short and easy to answer
- Put special instructions where they will be used
- Allow for putting an “x” in an answer box – proven to be most preferable for respondents.
- Use summary questions after a list of specific questions.

Formatting Your Survey

- ❖ At the end of your survey.
 - ❖ Thank your respondent
 - ❖ Let them know their participation is voluntary
 - ❖ Repeat return instructions
 - ❖ Repeat information of who to contact with questions or concerns

Finalizing Your Survey Instrument

⊞ Pilot your survey

- ⊞ Check for comprehension

- ⊞ Check for consistency

- ⊞ Check for errors

- ⊞ Check for length

⊞ Edit your survey based on pilot findings

Distributing Your Survey

⊞ Methods

⊞ In Person

- ⊞ Provide a space for private survey completion

⊞ Internet

- ⊞ Consider computer literacy

⊞ Mail

- ⊞ Cost considerations

⊞ Telephone

- ⊞ Time considerations

Distributing Your Survey

⊞ Increasing your response rates

- ⊞ Follow Up!
- ⊞ Establish trust
- ⊞ Make it appear to be an important task
- ⊞ Catch people at the right time
- ⊞ Make it relevant
- ⊞ Consider neatness
- ⊞ Include an envelope (for written surveys) – in person or mail

Distributing Your Survey

⊞ Increasing your response rates:

Interesting facts:

⊞ Color matters!

⊞ Colored covers increase response rate 2-4%

⊞ Blue and yellow improve response rate over black and white

⊞ Contrast is more important than colors

⊞ Make it look official

⊞ One-sided printing is better

Distributing Your Survey

⊕ Increasing your response rates: Incentives

⊕ Incentives increase response rates, but you don't have to promise cash to everyone.

⊕ Including a small monetary gift (\$1-2) with the survey increases response rate considerably

⊕ Drawings

⊕ Gas cards

⊕ Small gift – e.g. pedometer

Survey Exercise

 Questions?

 Comments?

Resources

- ⊞ Fanning, Elizabeth. “Formatting a Paper-Based Survey Questionnaire: Best Practices. <http://pareonline.net/pdf/v10n12.pdf>
- ⊞ Dillman, Don A. et al. “Principles for Constructing Web Surveys. <http://www.sesrc.wsu.edu/dillman/papers/websurveyppr.pdf>
- ⊞ University of Wisconsin Extension
<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cced/economies/broadband/FiveStepsforDesigninganEffectiveSurveyEditnumberin.pdf>