

MULTI-PAGE SURVEYS



GOAL

Community Surveys provide a great opportunity for project teams to establish baseline community needs, assess overall priorities, and gather structured feedback on specific planning ideas, ensuring that decision-making is data-driven and reflects the input of a wide range of voices.



OPPORTUNITIES

Community Surveys, whether printed or digital and no matter the length, can gather large volumes of responses, ideas, and feedback from a wide range of people. They are intended to be a low-barrier-to-participation tool that community members can quickly and easily fill out to ensure that their voice is represented in a public participation process, without having to attend a lengthy workshop or participate on a steering committee.



LIMITATIONS

Despite their reach, surveys can often lack the depth and nuanced dialogue present in steering committees, focus groups, and community workshops. Participants are filling out their responses in isolation from others, and although this means that they are not influenced by the feedback of others, it also limits the opportunity to learn from others ideas and experiences. Surveys also require careful design of questions to gather meaningful feedback without leading participants to a particular response or misrepresenting data. Lastly, surveys are such an easy and frequently-used tool that communities can experience survey fatigue, leading to low participation or quick responses that lack depth and authenticity.



INTENDED OUTCOME

- Gather a large volume of responses on a few key, targeted questions
- Reach an audience of individuals who may not be able to attend in-person engagement events, but would still like to participate in the process
- Provide an accessible option for those unable to attend in-person engagement

CLOSE BUT NOT QUITE?

- **Worried about participation?**
Make your survey as direct, simple, and user-friendly as you can to encourage participation. Limit the response time to 10 or 15 minutes so that people are willing to respond without feeling like it is a burden or interruption to their day.
- **Concerned about accessibility?**
It is important to understand your audience and evaluate their access to the internet. If your community has strong internet access, then digital surveys that are distributed via email blast and social media are a great option to keep costs down and encourage wide participation. If you are concerned about accessibility, consider printed surveys that are available at frequently visited community locations, like libraries, schools, etc. for distribution and collection.

Included in this Toolkit:

DESIGN THE SURVEY WORKSHEET

Use this worksheet to help your Project Team design and prepare a successful Community Survey. Note this is not the same as a statistically significant survey.

TOOL C

DESIGN YOUR SURVEY

Successful Community Surveys depend on the ease of responses, directness of questions, and actionable outcomes for a project. Use the questions below to help you better understand your audience, collect important information about your participants, structure your questions for optimal responses, and navigate survey fatigue.

Understand Your Audience


Deciding which demographic questions to include and how to phrase them is crucial for ensuring equity and understanding how responses received may or may not correlate to the conditions of the people offering those responses. By asking demographic questions, you are able to both understand whether specific groups of people were represented in responses received and whether or not their priorities differed from one another.

Identify the demographic factors that are relevant to your project and engagement goals. Do you have any outreach that will be focused on youth and youth services? Are you looking to provide workplace training for unemployed adults? Does your project have specific accessibility concerns?

- Age
- Gender
- Race/Ethnicity
- Language
- Income Level
- Employment Status
- Education
- Disability Status
- Housing Situation
- Other _____

Demographic information is sensitive and deeply personal. Having demographic questions in a survey can make some participants hesitant to respond, for fear that their race, gender, income status, etc. will be used against them or to identify them in a harmful way. Because of this, it is important that you make sure that participants are aware of how you will be using this demographic information to influence your project outcomes.

- Make demographic questions optional.
- Keep all responses confidential.
- Ensure that there are no personal privacy laws in your state or jurisdiction that prevent you from asking demographic questions.
- When communicating survey responses, verify your analysis between responses and demographic identifiers to ensure you are not misrepresenting feedback received.



40 | MEDC Public Participation Guide Toolkit

ASSESS YOUR SUCCESS

Use this worksheet to evaluate your Community Survey after it is completed. By understanding where you were successful and where you could improve, you can adjust your strategies and outreach before the next Community Survey.

Remember, not all community surveys need to be statistically significant - a 20% response rate can be great!

TOOL C

ASSESS YOUR SUCCESS

Whether you are at a key milestone in your project or your plan has been completed, it is important to evaluate the success of your engagement to help you learn, grow, and adapt for future engagement. Take this opportunity as a Project Team to evaluate the successes and shortcomings of your Community Survey experience.

SURVEY PARTICIPATION

How many people participated in your Community Survey?

How many people were you anticipating would participate in your Community Survey?

What percentage of people actually attended compared to what you prepared for? Calculate this by dividing the number of people who attended your workshop by the number of people you were anticipating would attend.

- Less than 25%
- 25-50%
- 50-75%
- 75-100%
- Over 100%

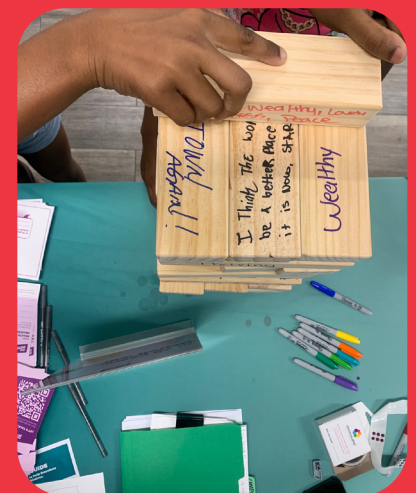
Who attended your Community Survey? Check all that apply.

- Young people under 18
- Students
- Elderly over 55
- Families
- Single Parents
- Renters
- Homeowners
- Unhoused
- Business Owners
- Non-Profits
- Neighborhood Organizations
- Block Groups
- Diverse People Groups
- Diverse Economic Status
- Other _____

If you had 75% or above of your anticipated participation in your Community Survey, consider this a success! If you had less than 75%, write down what you think went wrong or how you could improve participation in the future.

44 | MEDC Public Participation Guide Toolkit

Turn some of your survey questions into interactive activities at community events, like here where people write their vision for a neighborhood plan on a Jenga piece!





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Identify the demographic factors that are relevant to your project and engagement goals.

Do you have programming that will be focused on child and youth services? Are you looking to provide workforce training for unemployed adults? Does your project have specific accessibility concerns?

- Age
- Gender
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- Language
- Income Level
- Employment Status
- Education
- Disability Status
- Housing Situation
- Other

Demographic information is sensitive and deeply personal.

Having demographic questions in a survey can make some participants hesitant to respond for fear their race, gender, income, etc. will be used against them or to identify them in a harmful way. Because of this, it is important that you make sure participants are aware of how you will be using this information to influence your project outcomes.

- Consider adding a statement about why you are collecting this information and how you will use it, like “*The following questions are OPTIONAL and ANONYMOUS. We use these responses to understand who we are reaching, who is participating, and how to ensure we are reaching the full range of people in our city.*”
- Place these at the end of your survey, not the beginning.
- Make demographic questions optional.
- Keep all responses confidential.
- Ensure that there are no personal privacy laws in your state or jurisdiction that prevent you from asking demographic questions.



Here, a team member sits with a community member to help them fill out a paper survey.



Write Strong Survey Questions

- Is the language simple and jargon-free?**
Would a middle school student, a non-native speaker, or elderly community member all understand what the question is asking for? If not, how can you reduce planning jargon or define key terms to help everyone understand what you are asking for?
- Does the question ask only one thing?**
Are you asking for multiple points of feedback in one question? Is it possible that a participant could agree with one half of the question, but disagree or have feedback with the second half? If so, consider splitting one question into multiple questions to help gather discreet feedback.
- Is the question leading or biased?**
Are you giving away your project team's preferences, while also leading the participant to one response over another? Remember, you are here to gather their feedback. Remove your bias where you can, and communicate limitations as needed to explain the available choices.
- Are there overlaps between answer choices?**
Make sure each response is clear and distinct from one another. Avoid combining potential responses - for example, rather than having one answer choice be "Parks and Open Spaces," separate this into individual "Parks" and "Open Spaces" answer choices.
- Could the question be quantitative instead of qualitative?**
Qualitative information, while very valuable, can take more time to properly analyze and requires multiple reviewers to try and eliminate a biased assessment of results. See if the question can be quantitative instead. Can the results be easily tabulated as a number?



QUALITATIVE INSTEAD OF THIS...

How do you feel our economy is in the City?



QUANTIFIABLE ...ASK THIS

How close are we to having an economy that provides enough good-paying jobs for residents to afford living in our city?


- 1 - Not close at all
- 2 - Slight progress
- 3 - Moderate progress
- 4 - Very close
- 5 - Fully achieved

Combat Survey Fatigue

Because of the popularity of surveys, it is easy for communities to become bored and exhausted from providing their feedback in this format. This can lead to lower response rates, poor responses, and a negative perception of the project team or organization engaging with the community. Consider these rules of thumb and questions to ask the project team when developing the survey and asking the community to respond.

SURVEY LENGTH

What We Hear from Communities




"This survey is going to take way too long for me to finish, so I'm not going to do it."

Our Solution:

Surveys are best when they take 5 to 10 minutes to complete. If your survey is longer than this, consider reducing the number of questions for better response rates. Also, on the intro page of the survey, let participants know about how much time they can anticipate spending on the survey. This way they feel encouraged to participate if they know it will not take long.

SURVEY RELEVANCE

What We Hear from Communities



"So many of these questions don't even apply to me, so why should I waste my time filling them out?"

Our Solution:

Evaluate your questions to understand what is "good-to-know" versus "need-to-know" for your decision-making and make those "good-to-know" questions optional for participants. That way people can adjust how many questions they answer based on the time they have to spend taking the survey. Use "skip logic" strategically so that the questions in the survey react to respondents' previous answers. If they answer "no" to a question about being a business owner in their community, then any question that follows about their experience or concerns as a business owner are not relevant to them and should be hidden if possible.

SURVEY LENGTH

What We Hear from Communities

"I've already taken so many surveys on this topic and seen no results. Why should I take another?"



Our Solution:

Be clear and honest up front with your intentions. Recognize the value of your participants' time and demonstrate how you are using the feedback of other initiatives to also influence your responses. And if your project budget can afford it, offer incentives for completion! Enter participants into a raffle, partner with local organizations so that participants can receive discount coupons, or use an engagement passport to track participation and offer rewards for full participation.

SURVEY PLATFORM

What We Hear from Communities

"There are so many platforms - which one should I use?"



Our Solution:

There's no wrong answer! Use what you are most comfortable with.

- Google Forms and Microsoft Forms are common for communities with accounts.
- ArcGIS Survey123 is handy for communities with ArcGIS Online Accounts who want to add mapping questions to their surveys.
- Mentimeter and Poll Everywhere allow you to ask survey questions during presentations and get live results.



Check Out Some Template Questions

CREATE A VISIONING QUESTION

Starting from Scratch

Don't have a vision statement already?
Try one of these:

- If I had to describe our community today in one word, it would be _____.
- If I had to describe how I hope our community will be in the future in one word, it would be _____.
- This project will be successful if it ends with _____.

Basing it off a Prior Vision Statement

Already have a vision statement but want to double check it? Share the vision statement and ask questions like these:

- On a scale of 1 to 5, how well does this still represent what our vision for the future should be?
 - 1. Very well
 - 2. Somewhat well
 - 3. Neutral
 - 4. Somewhat poorly
 - 5. Very poorly
- What is missing?
- What still makes sense for us/this project?

"We need to get aligned on what we are all hoping to accomplish here."



SHARE QUESTIONS ABOUT GOALS

Have them Help Prioritize

Share a list of 10-15 top goals or priorities for the project and ask the following questions.

- While we aim to create the best project possible, we often times have to make tough choices about what to invest in first given funding, staff capacity, and available resources. What are the **top three goals** or priorities you think we should invest in first?
- Is anything missing from this list?
 - No
 - Yes (please specify)

Get Feedback on Goals

Already have a short list of prior goals you want to vet? Share each goal individually and ask questions like these:

- How close are we to accomplishing this goal?
 - 1. We have a lot of work to do
 - 2. We have some work to do
 - 3. We are doing ok
 - 4. We are doing well
 - 5. We are doing great
- What would we have to do to get a perfect score? *(only show this if they score a 3 or lower)*

"We need to figure out what we should even do first."



ASK ABOUT DEMOGRAPHICS

Ask Demographics

Be sure to label these as optional.

- **OPTIONAL** Are you a member of any city clubs or community organizations.
 - List known entities here
 - Other (please specify)
 - None
- **OPTIONAL** Please share your race/ethnicity (check all that apply).
 - Asian
 - American Indian/Native American
 - Black/African American
 - Middle Eastern/North African
 - Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
 - White/Caucasian
 - Latino/Hispanic
 - Other/Not Listed
- **OPTIONAL** Please share your age.
 - Under 18
 - 18-65
 - Over 65
- **OPTIONAL** Please share your income.
 - Less than \$24,999
 - \$25,000-34,999
 - \$35,000-49,999
 - \$50,000-74,999
 - \$75,000-99,999
 - \$100,000-149,999
 - \$150,000 or more

Other questions you could ask to better understand who you've reached would be which area of the city they live in (share a map with numbered zones for them to pick from or ask their ZIP code). You could also ask additional census questions like if they own or rent.



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SURVEY PARTICIPATION

How many people participated in your Community Survey?

How many people were you anticipating would participate in your Community Survey?

What percentage of people in your community or study area took the survey? (Tip: The typical rule of thumb tends to be 20%.)

- Less than 5%
- 5-10%
- 11-15%
- 16-20%
- Over 20%

Who completed your Community Survey?
Check all that apply.

- Young people under 18
- Students
- Elderly over 55
- Families
- Single Parents
- Renters
- Homeowners
- Unhoused
- Business Owners
- Non-Profits
- Neighborhood Organizations
- Block Groups
- Diverse People Groups
- Diverse Economic Status
- Other

If you had 20% or above of your audience participation in your Community Survey, consider this a success! If you had less than 20%, write down how you think you could improve participation in the future.

Additional Notes:

What are your key takeaways and lessons learned from this process that will help you implement a better Community Workshop in the future?

MEETING OUTREACH

What outreach methods did you use to spread the word about your Community Workshop?

- Printed Flyers
- Social Media Campaign
- Announcement in the Local Newsletter
- Direct Emails
- Direct Mailers
- Ad on the Local Radio/TV
- Door Knocking
- Other

LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT

Were people answering all of the questions and providing well-thought out responses?

- Always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

WHAT WAS ASKED

Write a few sentences describing what you hoped to learn and what you asked participants.

WHAT WAS LEARNED

Write a few sentences listing the key takeaways from the community feedback and where to find full results.

USING COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Write a few sentences describing how that feedback will impact the project.