



COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION

Step 5b: Survey Distribution

Our approach to survey distribution and sampling is a mix of purposive, convenience, and snowball sampling. Purposive sampling requires that you select people who can speak to your topics or belong to a specific group of people. A snowball sample involves distributing a survey to a certain individual or group and then asking that individual or group to distribute it to their contacts (Donaldson & Franck, 2016). Convenience sampling allows anybody who is available and finds the survey to answer it. The distribution of this survey will leverage multiple modes: social media (convenience), key informants and program participation lists (purposive), and people our key informants know (snowball). In the case of our CNA survey, if you have identified and confirmed an important community issue through your secondary data and key informant interviews, you'll want to distribute the survey to those who can speak to that issue. You'll also want that individual or group to distribute the survey to their networks. This is why you have (ideally) asked your key informants if they'd be willing to distribute the survey to their networks when you conduct their interviews.

Our approach also involves convenience sampling because you'll want to survey as many people as possible from any part of your communities. This involves utilizing Extension, county, and other listservs and networks available to you. Because a risk of utilizing existing listservs and networks is that the responses will reflect our existing learners, we want to ask them to distribute the survey themselves if possible. We will also include a standard survey question related to familiarity and involvement with CSUE/Office of Engagement & Extension (OEE) so that we can analyze data according to existing and potentially new learners.

In addition to using email listservs to distribute the survey, also leverage social media to the extent possible. We envision that surveys will be available electronically through Qualtrics. Although paper surveys may allow us to reach individuals without internet access, they come at a cost of time spent having to enter data into Qualtrics afterwards. Any sort of skip logic/branching feature would have to be adapted for use in a paper survey as well. Counties who feel that it is critical to utilize paper surveys to capture responses from a certain audience will be responsible for adapting their own surveys and entering data from those surveys into Qualtrics.

One way to work with the need to reach individuals without easy access to the internet is to make the survey available on a computer in your Extension office during the open survey window, setting up time and use parameters as appropriate. Providing multiple tablets for individuals attending events such as a county fair is another method for obtaining electronic survey responses from those who may not have easy access and/or just to increase response rates in general. Posting printed notecards or flyers at the computer banks of public libraries can be another way to market the survey to those without private internet access. Postcards/flyers at libraries and elsewhere can contain Qualtrics QR codes to allow the survey to be taken on respondent smartphones. Importantly, the state office plans to cover the cost of incentives for counties to offer survey respondents so that anyone exposed to the survey link will be made aware of a potential reward for responding.

Although our approach to survey distribution doesn't utilize random sampling, we can use what we know about sample sizes required for survey validity through random sampling to provide minimum goals for county survey responses. In general, counties will want between 300-400 responses at minimum to ensure the survey represents the county with a 3-5% margin of error and a 95% confidence interval (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). Though the survey responses may represent the sentiment of the county, you may not achieve demographic representation so responses for subgroups may not represent those subgroups reliably.

Taking all of this into account, each county will want to outline a comprehensive survey distribution plan. Features of this plan would include:

- what to include in the body of a survey distribution email and title of the email
- what to include in any sort of flyer or notecard advertising the survey
- a list of email listservs to utilize for survey distribution
- who will contact various listservs (it's best if all staff contact the people they know as opposed to a central individual contacting all listservs)
- a list of social media to utilize
- a list of key informants/partners to contact about distributing the survey
- a list of physical locations for individuals to respond via public computer, tablet, or paper copy
- the open survey window (a period of at least three weeks is recommended)
- a schedule of initial contacts and reminders (weekly is recommended)
- thoughts about the best days of the week or times of the day to market the survey via the different methods listed above (see tips below)

Tips for successful online survey distribution (Donaldson & Franck, 2016)

1. Send out the link at a time when people are more willing to complete a survey — avoid sending out the survey at 8 a.m. on a Monday for example.
2. Send out at least one reminder — most people take surveys right after they receive them, so it's important to send out reminders to increase response rates. Average respondents complete surveys in about four days. Follow up by focusing on the person, such as, "We realize this is a busy time of year, and we understand how valuable your time is. We are hoping you could give about five minutes to complete a short survey..."

Separate documents that may support your survey distribution efforts include Larimer County Extension's Initial Survey Distribution Plan and Sample Language for Body of Survey Distribution Emails.