

Tool – Types of engagement – surveys

Benefits of using surveys

Surveys are a highly versatile engagement tool because they can:

- gather input without the need to hold an event (such as a workshop or open day)
- reach those who will not, or who are unable to, attend an event
- support an engagement event by gathering more detailed or additional information that may not be able to be collected at the event itself
- target specific interest groups through direct email or reach a broader cross-section of the community by being published online
- utilise different communication platforms (e.g. hard copy versus website versus social media)
- be translated into different languages
- ask quantitative questions for rigorous, comparative analysis.

Tips for writing surveys

When preparing an engagement survey, you may like to consider the following:

- What kind of information do you need to collect from your survey and what kind of respondents would be best-placed to provide that information?
- Are your survey questions clear and relevant to your target audience/s?
- What personal, demographic data do you want to collect from respondents, such as age, postcode, occupation?
- Is your survey being run concurrently with other engagement activities? If so, remember to ask the same questions of each of your engagement participants so that you can compare their responses and analyse them equally.
- How are you going to report on your survey findings? It is important to have an appropriate balance of quantitative and qualitative questions. Quantitative questions, such as those that use drop-down lists, tick boxes and rating scales, allow you to collate and compare responses quickly.

Qualitative questions, such as those that require free-text responses, are much more time-consuming to evaluate. However, they are still important because they give respondents the opportunity to contribute their own personal thoughts on the topic at hand, such as what is most important to them or what their top ideas are. Getting the balance right between the two types of questions is important.

1. How are you going to thank respondents for their contribution and let them know how their input will be used? Online surveys can utilise a pop-up message after respondents have hit the 'submit' button. Hard copy surveys can include a message at the end of the survey, explaining where the survey should be submitted, the due date for completed surveys, and how feedback will add value to the project.

- How are you going to circulate the engagement report and ‘close the loop’ on engagement? It is important to collect email addresses from respondents so that you can send them the engagement report in due course and contact them about any future engagement opportunities.

Online survey tools

You may like to investigate the following data collection platforms:

- SurveyMonkey: www.surveymonkey.com
- Bang the Table: www.bangthetable.com
- Google Forms: www.google.com.au/forms/about/
- Typeform: www.typeform.com
- SurveyLegend: www.surveylegend.com
- Polldaddy: polldaddy.com/
- Survey Planet: surveyplanet.com/
- SurveyNuts: surveynuts.com/en
- Zoho Survey: www.zoho.com/survey
- FreeOnlineSurveys: freeonlinesurveys.com/#/
- Survs: survs.com/
- SurveyGizmo: www.surveygizmo.com/

WebFX has published a comparative review of the tools above: www.webpagefx.com/blog/internet/11-free-online-survey-tools-compared/