

Survey Development Process

Step 1	
Develop objectives	The objectives should describe what you want to learn by conducting the survey. Make sure that each objective aligns with a decision or action you plan to take. Avoid objectives that would be “nice to know” but don’t inform action.



Step 2	
Identify your target group	Your target group should align with the objectives for your survey. For example, you might be seeking information from parents of elementary school students, senior citizens, or all library cardholders.



Step 3	
Create your administration plan	Determine the best format to reach your target group: in print, online, by phone, or in person. Select a time frame for data collection and identify key staff who will manage the process. Plan sufficient time for analyzing your data and determine how and to whom you will communicate results.



Step 4	
Draft questions	Start by writing a number of questions for each objective and then choose the best to use. If possible, include more than one question that addresses each objective. This allows you to cross-check the answers, may provide more nuance since you can analyze the answers a group, and can serve as backup if one of your questions doesn’t work as you’d hoped.



Step 5	
Place your questions into an outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Introduction: Explain who is conducting the survey and why.b. Body: List your questions in a logical order.c. Demographics: Gather data about the respondents. Only ask for information that you need and will use.d. Closing: Thank the respondents and describe any next steps.



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Step 6

Review	Check that the survey is concise, the instructions are easy to understand, and the document is easy to read. Invite colleagues with “fresh eyes” to review your survey.
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Step 7

Pre-test and revise	Ask a small sample of your target group to take your survey in advance. If possible, ask one or two members of your target group to “think aloud” while taking your survey. This process can help you identify questions that need to be revised and spot problems with the data collection process.
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Step 8

Collect data	Implement your survey administration plan, keeping an eye out for any problems that arise during data collection. You may need to adjust your strategy if you are not getting a strong response rate. Consider offering an incentive and sending reminders to help you get more responses.
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Step 9

Analyze your results	The process of analysis will help you identify patterns and themes in the responses. Keep an eye out for unexpected themes and consider cross tabulating the data to reveal patterns across different groups. Be careful about making inferences beyond the individuals who actually responded to your survey.
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Step 10

Apply what you learn	Findings can be used to develop new services, adjust collections, refresh existing services, focus staff development activities and more. Consider sharing what you learn with key stakeholders both inside and beyond the library. Be sure to document your process and findings to make it easy to revisit them in the future.
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