SURVEYS
THE GOOD, THE BAD, THE UGLY

ASFPM Committee Chairs Retreat
August 31, 2011

ASFPM Surveys

Surveys ASFPM Conducts
- Certification
- Chapters
- Membership
- Projects

Methods of Assessment

- Metrics
- Benchmarking
- Focus Groups
- Interviews
- Direct Observations
- Survey
Survey Advantages

- Quick
- Cheap
- Broad coverage – people, locations
- Easy to quantify
- Anonymous
- Consistency

Survey Disadvantages

- Survey fatigue
- Time consuming
- Confusing
- Garbage in, garbage out
- Symptoms vs. Root Cause
- Overwhelming amount of data

Survey Process Model

1. Planning
2. Development
3. Design
4. Implementation
5. Analysis
6. Action
Planning

- Purpose of Survey
- Define Objective
- Identify Pool
- Resources: time, people, information
- Stakeholder buy-in

Development

- How / Which results will be shared
- Clear language: **acronyms & jargon**
- Code for easy grouping / tabulating
- Only ask what you can act on
- Design so data collected is actionable

Design

- 10 questions / 5 minutes or less
- Quantitative vs. Qualitative Data
- Avoid Leading Questions
- Short list of choices (3-7 options)
- Rating vs. Ranking
- Not Applicable & Comments?
Quantitative vs. Qualitative

**Quantitative**
What type of assistance do you think would most help you quit smoking?

a) Medication  
b) Counseling  
c) Both  
d) Neither  
e) Other: __________

**Qualitative**
What type of assistance do you think would most help you quit smoking?

Leading Question

**BAD**
Do you feel the new process is more effective than the old? YES / NO

**BETTER**
Which process do you feel is more effective? Process A / Process B

Rating vs. Ranking

**Rating**
Communication at work is good.

a) Strongly Agree  
b) Somewhat Agree  
c) Somewhat Disagree  
d) Strongly Disagree

**Ranking**
Put the following items in order with 1= most important & 5 = least important

___ Communication  
___ Salary  
___ Benefits  
___ Flexible Schedule
Not Applicable

What brand of computer do you own?
   a) IBM PC
   b) Apple
   c) Other

Implementation

- Pre-announce survey
- Build in Survey Monkey
- Test on small group first
- Choose a Contact for Troubleshooting
- Distribute with Instructions & Deadline
- Send Reminders

Analysis

- Analyze / Summarize data
- Interpret / clarify
- No “default” coding of skipped answers
- Correctly worded to get right data?
- Representative sample?
- Significant response?
Action

- Confirm agreement on action items
- Communicate results & actions
- Develop list of action / tasks / owners
- Monitor & report progress
- Celebrate progress with credit to survey

Summary & Conclusion

- Surveys aren’t always appropriate
- Existing survey data & resources are available
- Only ask if you intend to act
- Executive Office is here to help! 😊
  
  Email Kait@floods.org, 608-274-0123
**Survey Job Aid**

**ASFPM Surveys**
- Certification Survey (~every two years)
  - CFM Survey
  - Reliability & Validity Survey
- Membership Survey (~every three years)
- Chapter Survey (annually)
  - Webinar Topics
  - Finances & Budget
  - Communications
  - Insurance / Tax Exempt Status / Incorporation Status
  - Training
- Projects Surveys (as needed)
  - 2010 State & Local Programs
  - FEMA Digital Mapping
  - CTP – Enhancing state capability
- Conference & Workshops (ASFPM sponsored)

Avoid over-surveying respondents. If respondents get multiple surveys in a short period of time, they become increasingly less likely to respond. Surveying respondents implies that you’re asking for a reason and you plan to take action. Be careful what you ask about. Check with the Executive Office before sending out a survey to avoid over-surveying.

**Survey vs. Other Assessments**

Methods:
- **Metrics**: measures documented behavior / actions, # members, # communications, etc.
- **Benchmarking**: compares measured data against like organizations / groups
- **Focus Groups**: expensive, time consuming, greater respondent commitment
- **Interviews**: expensive, time consuming, no anonymity
- **Direct Observation**: expensive, time consuming, can be skewed
- **Survey**: easy / cheap to conduct & quantify, accesses larger pool, more anonymous

**Advantages of Surveys:**
- Efficient – can reach larger groups across multiple locations
- Quantification – produces numeric / statistical results
- Anonymity – controversial or sensitive issues
- Consistency – every candidate gets same question asked the same way

**Disadvantages of Surveys:**
- Results are only as good as the question construction and survey administration
- May get at symptoms rather than root cause
- Overwhelmed with interpretation of data
Remember… BAD SURVEY QUESTIONS = BAD DATA!  
Garbage in, Garbage out

Tips for Effective Surveys
- Plan in advance to allow adequate time – surveys don’t happen over night
- Check with Executive Office to see if survey was already done on your topic / are planning to in near future
- Only ask about what you plan to act on and whether you have the appropriate power to influence this area
- Ask questions that provide you with data in the right format- when testing your survey enter “dummy” data and ask yourself how you would use this data, does it indicate a specific action or just that you should act? Can you re-word the question to get better data?
- Form your objective then write your questions
- Test survey before sending
- Include N/A and Comment options

Testing Your Survey
- Do the respondents understand the Survey’s objective?
- Do the respondents feel comfortable answering the questions?
- Is the wording of the Survey clear?
- Is the time reference clear to the respondents?
- Are the answer choices compatible with the respondents’ experience in the matter?
- Do any of the items require the respondent to think too long or hard before responding? Which ones?
- Which items produce irritation, embarrassment, or confusion?
- Do any of the questions generate response bias? Which ones?
- Do the answers collected reflect what you want in regards to the purpose of the survey?
- Is there enough diversity in the answers received?
- Is the Survey too long?
- According to your test audience, have any other important issues been overlooked?

Response Rates

\[
\text{Response Rate} = \frac{\text{Completed Surveys}}{\text{Contacted (pool)}}
\]

Average response rates by survey administration method:
- Mail: 50% adequate, 60-70% good to very good
- Phone: 80% good
- Email: 40% average, 50-60% good to very good
- Online: 30% average
- Classroom pager: 50+% good
- Face to Face: 80-85% good
The Survey Process

Before You Survey

✓ Determine if a survey is the best method to obtain the data
✓ Only survey if you are committed to accepting the results acting on them
✓ Prioritize what you really need to know and survey on that only
✓ Define your objective before drafting questions
✓ Check with the Executive Office – we’re available to review and help test your survey before sending

Survey Process Model
1. Planning
2. Development & Design
3. Implementation
4. Analysis
5. Action

PLANNING
1. Clearly define your objective
   a. What do you want to get out of the survey?
   b. What action will this data inform?
2. What is the timeline for data collection?
   a. When do you need the final response collected by?
   b. What date do you need the results interpreted by?
   c. When do you plan to take action on the results?
   d. Allow for 3 weeks, but give a 2 week deadline to respond.
   e. Allow a minimum of one week for data interpretation and discussion of action items.
3. Define your survey pool
   a. Who will you get the most relevant data from?
   b. What constitutes a representative sample pool?
4. Document the purpose, focus, and target of the survey
5. Identify resource needs and availability: time, money, people, information
6. Get stakeholder buy-in

DEVELOPMENT
1. Get stakeholder input on survey details
2. Determine how and which results will be shared with respondents
3. Provide instructions throughout and group questions by topic
4. Use simple clear language - keep acronyms and jargon out of the survey
5. Code questions for easy tabulation – qualitative (essay) questions are hard to summarize.
6. Don’t ask for personal information unless you need it
7. Only ask about things you can act on, not just because you’re interested in knowing – asking implies you intend to do something with the data.
8. Ask one question at a time.
9. Keep it short – 10 questions or less done in 5 minutes or less
DESIGN
1. Avoid leading questions that imply an opinion. Instead of asking, “Do you feel the new procedure is more effective than the old procedure? Yes / No” ask “Which is procedure do you feel is more effective? Procedure A / B”
2. Provide a short list of choices (3-7) to choose from rather than long lists. Provide “other” option with fill-in space to include other choices.
3. Rating scales indicate strength of feeling/preference, Ranking scales indicate priority of items in a list.
   a. Scales with even number of choices (4 or 6 point scale) will force respondents to pick a side and avoid “middle of the road” answers that are difficult to act on and interpret.
4. When providing multiple choice answers, keep choices in a consistent format.
   Example: If you ask about length of time something takes provide all choices in the same unit of measure (don’t provide two choices in hours, and a third in minutes)
5. Provide an “Not Applicable” or “N/A” option to allow for situations you can’t anticipate
6. Provide at least one “comment” question or ask, “What else do you think we should know?” to provide respondents a place to voice a concern not covered by other questions.
7. Tell respondents how long the survey will take to complete and provide instructions along the way
8. Tell respondents what you plan to do with the data and how they can get a copy of the results (if applicable)
9. Thank respondents for their time
10. Draft survey, have stakeholders review before testing

IMPLEMENTATION
1. Communicate about survey to the pool
2. Pre-announce
   a. Why / How / What / When
   b. Deadline for response
   c. Reminder two days before deadline
   d. Reminder one week after deadline (if more time is needed)
   e. Thanks
   f. Results
3. Determine who the contact will be for issues with the survey and include that information
4. Test survey on a small practice group before sending to entire survey pool
5. Revise after testing
6. Issue survey to pool with instructions

ANALYSIS
1. Analyze data, interpret / clarify –
   a. If a question is skipped- don’t code as a “default” answer for all non-responses (e.g. blank = “agree”), this will skew the results
   b. What does the data tell you? Was the question worded correctly to elicit the correct data?
   c. Was the sample size representative and significant?
2. Present the data in a graphical chart
3. Report data to stakeholders

ACTION
1. Confirm agreement and prioritize action items – not everything can / needs to be addressed
2. Communicate results and action items to respondents
3. Designate action and assign tasks
4. Monitor and report progress to stakeholders and respondents
5. Celebrate progress (credit the survey as motivation for this outcome)
Survey Question Examples

Rating Scales

It’s important to have a balance when using scales. Each end of the spectrum should have equal representation. Use scales with an even number of choices to force respondents to pick a side (and avoid neutral or middle of the road answers). Use scales with an odd number of choices to provide a neutral or middle of the road option.

BAD (unbalanced: 3 positive, 2 negative, 0 neutral)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

GOOD (balanced: 2 positive, 2 negative, 1 neutral)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Poor</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
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Structure Questions According to Your Objective

Question #1 below is least specific, Question #3 is the most specific. Your objective will guide the level of specificity. If the objective was to determine the average use of SurveyMonkey by respondents, Questions #2 and #3 provide the best data. Question #3 will require more work to interpret results (numeric, word, or essay responses) but will capture more detail about frequent users.

Question #1: Have you used SurveyMonkey in the last year to send out a survey?
  - Yes
  - No
  - Not Applicable - I don’t use surveys

Question #2: How many times in the last year have you used SurveyMonkey to send out a survey?
  - Not Applicable - I don’t use surveys
  - Zero
  - Once
  - Twice
  - More than 3 times

Question #3: If you had to estimate, how many times have you used SurveyMonkey to send out a survey? (Please write in an estimate number) ____________

Leading / Loaded Questions

Questions should not lead the respondent toward one direction or another.

BAD (implies new procedure is more effective)

Do you feel the new procedure is more effective than the old procedure?
  - Yes
  - No

GOOD (neutral)

Which procedure do you feel is more effective?
  - Procedure A
  - Procedure B
Clear, Concise Question Wording

Questions should be clearly worded, easy to understand, and only ask one thing at a time.

**BAD**

*What would be your primary motivation to participate in an online learning experience? (Select your top 3 reasons)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Greatest motivation</th>
<th>Motivating</th>
<th>Somewhat motivating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of access to training locally</td>
<td>☐ Lack of access to training locally</td>
<td>☐ Lack of access to training locally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited travel budget to attend training</td>
<td>☐ Limited travel budget to attend training</td>
<td>☐ Limited travel budget to attend training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schedule (timing) of class is convenient for me</td>
<td>☐ Schedule (timing) of class is convenient for me</td>
<td>☐ Schedule (timing) of class is convenient for me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good past experiences with online training or classes</td>
<td>☐ Good past experiences with online training or classes</td>
<td>☐ Good past experiences with online training or classes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**GOOD**

*How likely are the following factors to motivate you to participate in an online learning experience?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Unlikely</th>
<th>Somewhat Unlikely</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat Likely</th>
<th>Very Likely</th>
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**Answer Choices – Only 1 Correct Answer**

Answer choices should be coded so there can only be one correct answer. For the example below, if your community had a population of 100,000 people, which choice would you select in the BAD example?

**BAD**

*What size community do you serve?*

- a) Less than 10,000 people
- b) 10,000 - 50,000 people
- c) 50,000 – 100,000 people
- d) 100,000 – 500,000 people
- e) 500,000 – 1,000,000 people
- f) >1,000,000 people

**GOOD**

*What size community do you serve?*

- a) Less than 10,000 people
- b) 10,000 – 49,999 people
- c) 50,000 – 99,999 people
- d) 100,000 – 499,999 people
- e) 500,000 – 1,000,000 people
- f) >1,000,000 people
National CFM® Certification Program and Exam Reliability & Validity Process

The Certification Board of Regents (CBOR), which oversees the National CFM® program and exam, is conducting an assessment to ensure continued quality, consistency, and credibility of our certification. This three-part process is evaluating the existing program and exam. The assessment is being done to ensure the program and exam are properly targeted to essential knowledge areas in current practice, constructed following best practices, and managed to ensure continued credibility and sustainability. It is important to note that this is the same process used by accredited certification programs to ensure quality in their programs and exams.

Subject Matter Experts

The first step in the assessment process was a meeting of Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) from a representative cross-section of the floodplain management profession and CFMs to conduct FPM Practice Analysis. This group of 10-12 SMEs from all levels of government, private industry, diverse geographical locales, and riverine and coastal areas met in July 2008 to compile a comprehensive list of tasks and duties currently in practice in the field. Following that meeting, the second step in the process began. A survey was developed about these tasks and duties and was distributed to all ASFM members (both CFMs and non-CFMs).

Survey

The survey asked questions to validate the list of tasks and duties in order to determine essential competencies every CFM should have and know. For this key step in the process to be a success, a certain percentage of survey responses were required. The survey was released in August 2009. We urged all our members to consider completing this survey a vital and vital contribution to the CFM program and the floodplain management profession. After compiling the survey responses, the third step in the process took place, the exam validation meeting.

Summary of Survey Responses - ALL RESPONDENTS
Summary of Survey Responses - LOCAL
Summary of Survey Responses - STATE
Summary of Survey Responses - REGIONS / MULTI-STATE AGENCIES
Summary of Survey Responses - FEDERAL
Summary of Survey Responses - PRIVATE
Summary of Survey Responses - OTHER