Writing Effective Survey Questions

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Learn how to create a quality survey.
Importance of Effective Questions

Well-written questions:

• Produce quality surveys
• Yield accurate, reliable answers
• Provide data that is easy to compile and analyze

Collect community input for coordination plans.
Tips for Writing Effective Questions

• Use simple language
• Avoid jargon and acronyms
• Include full range of responses
• Narrow the focus
• Avoid leading questions

Follow these tips to develop a quality survey.
Use Simple Language

Do you have health complications that restrict your ability to utilize the fixed route transit located near your place of residence?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Complex words make questions hard to understand.
Try This Instead…

Do you have health problems that keep you from using the bus near your home?

- Yes
- No

Use simple language so it is easier to understand.
Avoid Jargon and Acronyms

Have you ever used ADA paratransit services through the AAA’s 5310 program?

- Yes
- No

People in the community don’t know these acronyms.
Try This Instead…

Have you ever gotten a ride from a van with a wheelchair lift by calling the Area Agency on Aging?

☐ Yes
☐ No

Use words familiar to those who will take the survey.
Include Full Range of Responses

How often do you depend on family or friends for transportation?

- Always
- Sometimes
- Never

Not enough response choices to respond accurately.
Try This Instead…

How often do you depend on family or friends for transportation?

- None of my trips
- Less than half of my trips
- About half of my trips
- More than half of my trips
- All of my trips

Provide enough choices to get accurate responses.
Narrow the Focus

Please describe a challenge with transportation.

What type of information is being sought?
Try This Instead…

Please share a challenge that you have experienced in the past 6 months using the city bus.

Focus on exactly what you want to evaluate.
Avoid Leading Questions

I am comfortable using the new mobile app.

- Yes
- No

They might feel embarrassed to say no.
Try This Instead…

On a scale from 1 to 10, rate how comfortable or uncomfortable you are using the new mobile app.

(uncomfortable) 1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10 (comfortable)

The range of responses yields honest feedback.
Another Leading Question

Do you agree with this statement: Transit programs for older adults and people with disabilities should be a top funding priority for ABC Agency.

- Yes
- No

It is clear what the hopeful response will be.
Try This Instead…

Which of the following do you think should be the top funding priority for ABC Agency?

- Transit programs for older adults and people with disabilities
- Walking and biking paths
- City bus upgrades

More answer choices bring about accurate responses.
Consequence of Poorly-Written Questions

- Response errors
- Questions left unanswered
- Feedback is unreliable
- Quit the survey early
- Throw the survey away

Poorly-written questions lead to unreliable results.
In Conclusion…

Asking good survey questions results in:

• Feedback that is representative of the community
• Better response rate
• Results that are easier to analyze
• Connection with community members

Quality surveys lead to better program evaluation.