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# Evaluation How To: Surveys

Surveys are one way to receive feedback from program participants or the community. Surveys can provide both stories and numbers to measure the impact of programs and help identify areas for improvement.

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Quantitative data can be measured and includes data such as counts and numbers that can be shared in a graph or pie chart.

Qualitative data is non-numerical and can include storytelling, art, photos, and more.

This guide covers all the steps of designing and using a survey for evaluation, including:

- Step 1. What do you want to learn?
- Step 2. Collecting completed surveys
- Step 3. How do you use information from your survey?
- Step 4. Follow up surveys
- A sample survey

“Evaluation is an Indigenous value, together we are reclaiming this ancestral practice of gathering data to be used for the good and well-being of our people.”

(Kawakami et al., 2007, pg. 344)



## General survey tips:

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Surveys should not be a significant burden on you or the participants.

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Make sure surveys ask enough questions to gain the necessary information but remain short enough that people have the time and energy to complete all the questions in depth. You should be intentional about only asking questions that provide useful data for the community.

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Remember to use accessible language in the survey. One option is to share the survey with people from the target audience, such as an Elder or youth, and collect feedback on whether the questions make sense and are clear. In other words, ensure those who will take the survey can read it and understand what each question is asking.

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Assure participants that their honest feedback is valuable to the program. Remind participants that all information collected is anonymous and will not affect the services they receive. Do not ask for people to write their names unless they are consenting to be contacted later for follow-up questions.

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Identify opportunities to include survey questions into program activities. This way you are not only engaging participants in an interactive activity but also collecting valuable evaluation feedback.

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**Our mission is to decolonize data,  
for indigenous people, by indigenous people.**  
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**Urban Indian  
Health Institute**  
A Division of the Seattle Indian Health Board

## Step 1. What do you want to learn?

Evaluation should serve the interests of the organization and community. When deciding what you want to know about a program consider the core values or guiding mission of your organization. It is also crucial to have a clear vision of how this evaluation will be useful or meaningful to the community you serve.

### How has the program:

- impacted emotional, spiritual, mental, or physical health?
- increased access to a health service?
- changed community perspective on the topic?
- increased a sense of cultural or community connectedness?
- influenced community to integrate what they learned into their own family/work/community?

## Deciding on Survey Questions

Direct questions are easy to measure and can often be quantified or counted. Here are some examples of direct questions:

### This event increased my knowledge of traditional forms of healing and health.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

### This program increased my access to pre-diabetes screening.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

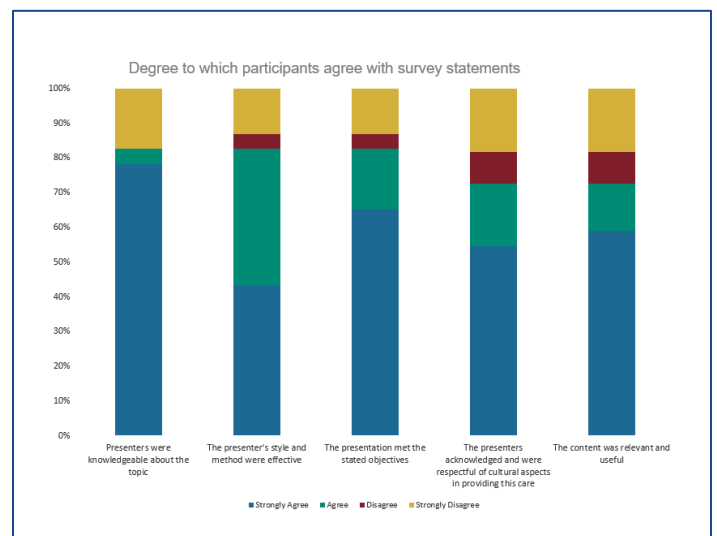
It is helpful to use a scale for answers, rather than just yes or no options. For example, if someone rates their knowledge of a topic from “no knowledge” before a program to “yes knowledge” after, this doesn’t offer as much insight as if they can indicate that they went from “no knowledge” to “moderate knowledge,” or even “no knowledge” to “expert knowledge.” This detail can help you better understand the impact of your program and provide insight on how to best adjust programming or activities based on participant feedback.

When visualizing quantitative data (like in a graph or pie chart) less is more. Using a graph that highlights one strong statement like “90% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that knowledge of traditional forms of healing increased” is a more powerful way to share results. Try to avoid long and confusing statements like “5% of participants strongly disagreed, 5% of participants disagreed, 35% of participants agreed, and 55% of participants strongly agreed that knowledge of traditional forms of healing increased.”

## Clear Chart



## Confusing chart



## Asking Open-Ended Questions

You may also want to include open-ended questions in the survey to collect stories that can be used as qualitative data. One way to do this by simply asking “why” or “how” after direct questions, so participants are prompted to expand on their answers.

### Sample open-ended questions:

Has your thinking about breastfeeding as a first food shifted or evolved because of the workshop? (*hint: you can quantify this question*)

If yes, how?

Are there any changes or tools that would have made the workshop better or helped you bring the information back to your own community, organization, etc.?

You may also want to determine how the knowledge of participants or behavior changed based on the programming. For longer-term programs you can conduct “pre” surveys and “post” surveys. That is when participants receive one survey before they start the program and one at the end. Just these two time points, one from the beginning and one from the end, from each participant is enough data to provide useful information about knowledge or behavior change.



For a one-time event, it may confuse some people to receive two surveys. Instead, you can format the survey questions like this:

### Please rate your level of knowledge of health promotion for diabetes prevention:

Prior to the presentation:

- No knowledge
- Minimal
- Moderate
- Expert

After the presentation:

- No knowledge
- Minimal
- Moderate
- Expert

## Demographic Questions

It is important to include some demographic questions in the survey to see if certain groups are participating in programs more. Are only adults but no youth and elders coming to your events? You can also identify if certain groups experience the program differently. Maybe certain aspects confused elders or were not appropriate for youth. Demographic questions usually include race, ethnicity, age, and tribal affiliation. Depending on the size of the organization’s service area, you may also want to collect what town/geographic region they are from by asking for their zip code. It is also important to let participants know their answers to any question, including demographic questions, will not affect access to services.

## Step 2. Collecting completed surveys

After drafting the survey, it is a good idea to get feedback on the questions to see if other people understand what they are asking. One way to do this by having community members, patients, or even co-workers review the survey. After receiving the feedback, you should edit the survey, and once the feedback is incorporated, the survey is ready to go!

### How to Distribute your survey

Now that the survey is ready, you need to decide how to distribute it. Consider: Who do you want to answer your survey? What format will be most accessible to the target audience? You should also account for the capacity of staff to distribute surveys or input data by hand. You need to consider the technological capacity of your organization if an online survey is preferred.

A paper survey is appropriate if you want to distribute the survey right after an event or workshop. They are also helpful when working with elders or in communities with limited access to the internet or computers.

You may distribute copies of your survey to clients or participants at events, in the lobby of the organization, send it to program participants in the mail, or wherever you think it would best reach the audience you are interested in. If using a paper survey, it is helpful to include the name of the program and the date. This way after it is stored you can easily keep track of the survey results.

If doing a survey at the end of an event or workshop, it is helpful to set aside a few minutes for participants to complete it. If there is time, you may want to offer participants the option to participate in a small reflection circle after the program to gather qualitative feedback as well.

An online survey might make sense if evaluating a series of activities and programs, hosting an online webinar, or had an event where a lot of people from out of town attended. They are also helpful for follow-up surveys that you conduct a few months or a year after a program. If the organization has the capacity, you can also distribute surveys on tablets or computers at an event, health fair, or pow wow. Online surveys also help protect data, since there are no paper copies, and save time from inputting data by hand into a spreadsheet. They are easy to distribute via email but may require additional follow-up depending on how many people respond.

You can use services like Google Forms, Qualtrics, or Survey123 by ArcGIS to create online surveys. These tools all allow users to download a spreadsheet of the data. Google Forms is free to everyone who has a Gmail account. Qualtrics or Survey123 both require subscriptions but may be worth spending money on if you plan to conduct multiple surveys or collect a larger number of responses. Both allow for more complex question types (open-ended, multiple-choice, drop-down bar, etc.) and offer different pathway types or skip logic. For example, if a person answers “No,” they can be directed to a different follow-up question than if someone answers “Yes.”

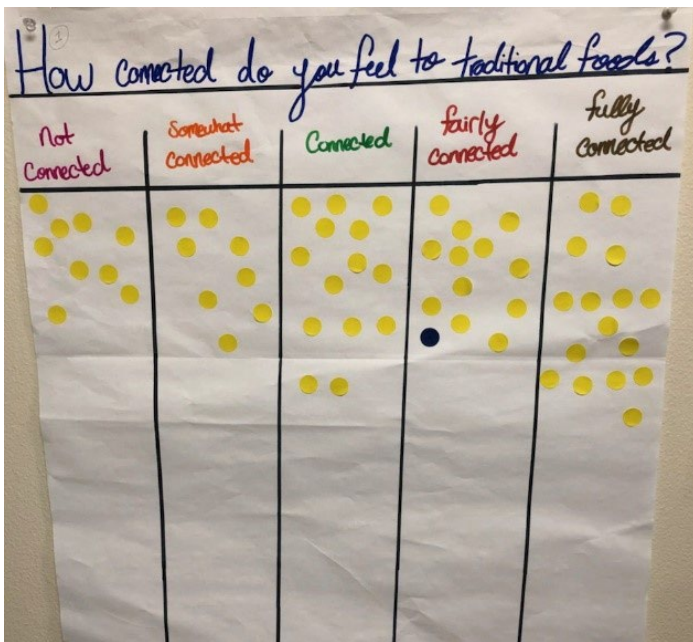
Another option is to collect survey answers by simply sitting down with a participant and asking them the survey questions through a conversation. Though this method may take longer, it does allow you to make sure no questions are missed. It also gives participants the chance to ask any clarifying questions they may have about the survey questions.



## Make it Interactive!

Depending on the participants or clients, an interactive survey may be a helpful strategy. One option is to set up a board or large piece of paper with the survey questions and give each person stickers to place where they see fit. This can be helpful in the middle of a long event to collect real-time feedback. It also may be useful for audiences for whom you think a longer paper or online survey won't work. You can also track feedback from participants individually by giving them stickers with a unique number. Then you can see if individual participant responses change before, during, and after the activity. To the right is an example of what that can look like. Depending on the technological capacity of your organization and program participants, you can also use a program like Poll Everywhere to receive live feedback ([www.polleverywhere.com](http://www.polleverywhere.com)).

Participants can answer questions about the program in real-time on their computers or by texting their answers. Just like the paper version, this method allows you to get in-the-moment feedback to adjust the program as needed and collect survey data interactively.



## Step 3. How do you use information from your survey?

### Program planning

The goal of Indigenous evaluation is to serve the community. Data can be used to determine the impacts of a program and identify ways to improve it in the future to enhance participant health, learning, or engagement. One best practice is integrating evaluation data into decision making. This can be done through regularly reporting and reviewing data. You may distribute survey findings at staff meetings, community advisory board meetings, Tribal council meetings, or share them with the Board of Directors.

### When deciding how to use your survey data, ask yourself questions like:

- Were there certain aspects of the program that resonated with most of the participants?
- Were there certain aspects of the program that did not work for the audience?
- How can we adjust our work to increase access to the program or services?

If you are collecting data, reviewing it, and then adjusting the program, you are doing evaluation right!

### To share with the community

You can also use survey data to share the impact of a program with the community. One way to do this is by creating simple graphics to communicate information from the survey in an accessible way. You should also consider how to best distribute the information back to the community.

Think about what form of storytelling with data will resonate best. For example, do you want to create a handout for an upcoming community event? Do you want to create a video or blog post that combines storytelling with the survey information?

## Marketing purposes

Survey data can be used to create communication materials for your organization, such as blog posts, pamphlets, or included in your Annual Report. These are additional ways to share evaluation results within the community and help promote future programs and activities. These communication materials can also demonstrate the importance and impact of the program to potential partners, funders, or community leaders.

## Report to funders

Evaluation, including surveys, should be based on questions that measure the impact of the work in a way that is meaningful to the community, culturally appropriate, and sustainable for the organization and community. However, you will likely also need to report specific evaluation data to your funders. Your interests may be different from funders, and that's okay! Survey data beyond what is requested can still be useful to include in their reports.



## Step 4. Follow up surveys

Sometimes you might want to conduct a second evaluation a few months, or even a year, after the program is complete. This can show if any long-term impacts resulted from the work, whether on a personal, organizational, or community level. You can ask the same questions and compare the answers of the participants. Alternatively, you can ask open-ended questions about what has continued to resonate with participants about the program or what they have integrated into their personal lives, work, or community. You can also conduct follow up interviews, rather than surveys.

If you want to conduct a follow-up survey or evaluation, be sure to collect contact information from participants in the initial survey. Here is how you can ask for it on the survey:

We would like to follow up at a later date to hear how what you learned from this session has been used. If it is okay to contact you in six to twelve months, please write your email and/ or phone number here:

Here is how you can frame questions in a follow up survey:

Has your thinking about (program topic) shifted or evolved because of the (activity)? If yes: Can you tell me more about that?

In what way?

How have you taken the information you learned at the (activity or workshop) back to your community? Please give examples, such as personal, programming, or organizational/ tribal level changes.



### Was this handout helpful?

Please send your feedback to [info@uihi.org](mailto:info@uihi.org).

## Sample survey

**[Organization name]**  
**[Name of Event] [Date]**

**Type of Activity**

- Event/Workshop
- Community Needs Assessment
- Policy, systems, or environmental change
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Survey Questions**

This event/program promoted health and well-being by offering chronic disease (diabetes, heart disease, asthma, etc.) prevention and management activities that...

apply indigenous practices of spirituality, indigenous lifeways, or cultural resources.

- Agree Strongly
- Agree
- Disagree
- Disagree Strongly



increase access to and knowledge of traditional foods, plants, land, or resources.

- Agree Strongly
- Agree
- Disagree
- Disagree Strongly



increase access to traditional forms of healing and health and well-being promotion.

- Agree Strongly
- Agree
- Disagree
- Disagree Strongly



increase access to physical activity opportunities or traditional methods of physical activity.

- Agree Strongly
- Agree
- Disagree
- Disagree Strongly



increase access and opportunities for learning and using indigenous languages.

- Agree Strongly
- Agree
- Disagree
- Disagree Strongly



recognizes local histories and current contextual factors that have contributed to chronic diseases in urban Indian communities.

- Agree Strongly
- Agree
- Disagree
- Disagree Strongly



includes perspectives, needs, and values of urban Indian community members.

- Agree Strongly
- Agree
- Disagree
- Disagree Strongly



includes learning opportunities with and between urban Indian community members of all ages.

- Agree Strongly
- Agree
- Disagree
- Disagree Strongly



**Demographics**

*All information is anonymous and does not and will not affect the services you receive.*

**Race** (mark all that apply):

- White
- Black or African American
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- Asian
- Middle Eastern or North African
- Other Indigenous
- Some other race: \_\_\_\_\_

**Ethnicity:**

- Hispanic or Latino
- Not Hispanic or Latino

**Age:**

- Youth (0-24)
- Adult (25-55)
- Elder (56 and older)

**Tribal Affiliation:**

\_\_\_\_\_