



## Basic Tips for Creating Surveys

- Decide on the specific purpose of your survey and who your target population is. What are you trying to find out? From who?
  - Examples may include:
    - Program satisfaction from current participants
    - Needs and preferences for services from current participants
    - Program outcomes from current participants (e.g., changes in dietary intake, shifts in population serving, impact on social wellbeing)
    - Needs and preferences for services from non-participants
    - Characteristics of current participants or non-participants
- Determine the best format for your survey.
  - Some items to consider include time, money, staffing resources, survey purpose, and target population.
  - Review various methods of surveying (e.g., paper, electronic, phone, in-person verbal) and consider their intended use and pros and cons.
  - Keep in mind the literacy level of respondents and how those who are visually impaired might complete a survey.
  - Does the survey need to be prepared in multiple languages?
- Build upon surveys that have already been developed, when possible. This may include survey tools developed by researchers, organizations, or other peers within the aging network.
- Keep your survey simple and as short as possible. Make sure the questions you're asking are all relevant to your purpose.
  - Tip: Look at your survey questions and imagine what the final results may look like. What will you do with the responses you've received? Does the potential data align with your original purpose?

- Ask specific questions that address one issue at a time. Look for “and” in your proposed question as a hint that you might accidentally be asking two-part questions. (“Which menu option do you prefer?” vs. “Which menu option do you think is healthier and more appealing?”)
- Keep your questions short and free of complex or technical terms.
- Use scales (“always, often, sometimes, never”) or multiple-choice options instead of fill-in-the-blank responses whenever possible – more people will complete a survey if it’s quick and easy to fill out.
- Limit yes/no questions where applicable. Consider if it is possible to rephrase the question as a scale or multiple-choice question instead.
- Avoid asking “framing” or “leading” questions. For example, only providing responses that force participants to answer in a specific way, or making assumptions of the survey participant.
- Ask multiple people to look over your survey before you send it out to test it and try to catch any errors or tough questions. If possible, ask for feedback from individuals within the population the survey is intended for.
- Provide instructions for returning the completed survey, if using a paper format.

For further resources and reading:

- One example of a [congregate meal participant survey](#)
- More tips on developing [surveys](#)

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