

DATE: November 30, 2015

TO: Board of Mayor and Aldermen

FROM: Eric Stuckey, City Administrator
Michael Walters Young, Business Process Improvement Manager

RE: Follow-up Questions & Answers RE: Citizens Survey

As a result of our last work session, staff followed-up with the National Research Center on a series of questions regarding their product, the National Citizens Survey. We received, along with these answers three attachments –

- a) Sample Custom Questions
- b) Survey Validity Statement
- c) List of Communities using or have used National Citizens Survey

Questions asked by staff are in **BLACK**. Responses from the National Research Center are in **RED**.

- 1) Is there a way to limit the open web survey? By requesting e-mail addresses or limiting submissions to one per IP address?

We are able to track IP addresses in the software we use for the web survey so we can plan to keep an eye on responses from duplicate IP addresses and opt to remove all but the first submitted response. The caution here is we wouldn't want to remove responses that could be coming from shared computers (at the library, etc.). It's worth noting that we find that it can be difficult enough to get residents to respond to a survey even once, and rarely run into the issue where residents are ballot-stuffing. If we do run into this, it is highly unlikely that receiving multiple responses from one individual will have an impact on the aggregate dataset (a few responses out of hundreds is still a very small percentage).

- 2) What is the typical return rate from the formal randomized survey?

We typically find response rates range from 20% to 40% on the higher end. If you mail to 2,600, you'll likely hear from a minimum of 500 (conservative estimate based on a less than 20% response rate).

- 3) The BOMA is concerned about such a small sample of the population being surveyed. What research/statements do you have which supports the formal survey approach and why is 1400 or 2600 households considered a statistically significant sample?

I've attached some language about survey validity if it's helpful to pass this along to those who voiced concern. [See attachment "New Item – Survey Validity.pdf"] The short answer is that our methods in randomly selecting survey recipients from all households in the community allows us to confidently say that responses from those we hear back from represent the entire community within a margin of error based on the number of responses. For example, if you opt to mail to 2,600 we'd likely hear back from about 500 or more residents. This number of responses yields a margin of error of four percent, meaning we can be confident the survey results are within plus or minus four percentage points of what the results would be if we had surveyed and heard back from every adult in Franklin.

A part of this conversation also includes costs. If cost was not a concern, we'd like to be able to survey each household in the community, but implementing methodology that allows for scientific validity is the next best thing and a cost-effective way to learn about resident opinion.

As a general note, our methods are an industry best practice and we are continually researching and reviewing our methods to ensure we are staying current and offering the best solutions in survey research to local governments.

I am happy to chat about this further!

4) What cities in Tennessee have used the NCS?

Our benchmarking database houses data for more than 500 communities and is ever changing as we add more data and remove old data (more than 5 years old) from the comparisons in an effort to keep the data relevant and fresh. We add NCS data as well as data from custom surveys we conduct, and we also add data collected by other consultants or data collected in-house at a city, town, county, etc. Below I have outlined which communities in TN are in our database, and of those, which are NCS and which are not NCS.

- Johnson City (NCS)
- White House (NCS)
- Morristown (NCS)
- Sevierville (NCS)
- Bristol (NCS)
- Cookeville (non-NCS)
- Germantown (non-NCS)
- Brentwood (non-NCS)
- Chattanooga (non-NCS)

5) Do you have a list of all cities which have used the NCS?

I have attached two lists; one is all the communities in our database with data less than 5 years old (575) and the second is all communities in our database that are NCS communities with data

less than 5 years old (205). [See Attachment – New Item - List of Communities.xlsx] There are so many that I didn't want to add them to the e-mail here ☺

- 6) What does final report look like? What comparative data is presented? Would it be possible to identify “comparable communities” nationwide which are like Franklin?

[Here](#) is a sample report for reference. We also offer a handful of other reports with the basic service that include a technical appendices with detailed methods and full frequencies of the results along with a trend report (comparing past data you've collected) and a dashboard report that is a quick 3 pages outlining all the data in an easily navigable table.

A national comparison is a part of the basic service cost and each additional custom comparison is \$891. Most participants in The NCS choose a custom benchmark based on geography (e.g., region or state), population range, a combination of both or sometimes we have communities hand-pick a group of communities to be compared to. We can certainly work with you to identify communities in our database that you deem comparable to Franklin.

- 7) Do you have samples of the custom questions and the open-ended questions?

I have attached a document including some sample custom questions. [See Attachment – New – Item - Sample Custom Questions.pdf] Below are a couple open-ended questions we most commonly see used. In regards to all custom questions including the open-ended questions, we will work with you to craft these and will offer our expertise in suggesting wording changes to ensure the question is asked in a way that yields the most useful data for your purposes.

- What is the single biggest challenge or problem ABC will have to face in the next 5 years?
- What would you say is the most serious issue facing ABC at this time?
- What one thing do you like most, if anything, about living in ABC?

- 8) Can there be more than one-opened question?

We are happy to include more than one open-ended question on the survey. Each open-ended question is the additional cost of \$1,665. I would note here that we rarely have communities offer more than one open-ended question, as we find that the space available for custom questions can be better used by asking closed-response questions. I am happy to chat about this further!

- 9) We are concerned about non-computer users for the web-based open survey. For an additional fee, can we submit print versions of the survey for you to tabulate?

I'd be happy to put together a cost estimate for this, if you'd like which would likely be based on the number of print surveys we'd need to enter. The other option, that would be no additional cost, would be for someone on your City staff to collect any hard copy surveys that residents filled out and enter them into the web survey.