

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FOOD SAFETY AND INSPECTION SERVICE
WASHINGTON, DC

FSIS DIRECTIVE

1060.1,
Rev.1

4/2/24

AGENCY SURVEYS

I. PURPOSE

This directive provides the procedures that program areas are to follow when developing or conducting surveys and questionnaires that assist the Agency in collecting data on program operations; fulfill specific Agency or Department requirements; or gather information on such topics as Agency services or employee satisfaction. This directive also provides the processes and standards for the use of survey and questionnaire instruments throughout FSIS. This excludes questionnaires in the Public Health Information System that are used to collect establishment-specific information, surveys conducted by the Office of Employee Experience and Development to assess employees' satisfaction with training, and survey or questionnaire instruments that FSIS uses for which confidentiality is not a necessary component of the data collection or analysis. FSIS is revising this directive to update the processes and procedures the Agency uses to develop and conduct Agency surveys.

II. CANCELLATION

FSIS Directive, 1060.1, Agency Surveys, 2/15/18

III. BACKGROUND

A. A survey is a method used to collect and analyze information from a population, or from a sample of a population. FSIS uses surveys to collect data from an audience or audiences of interest on questions related to program operation characteristics, preferences or behavior, experiences related to internal services or partnerships with FSIS, and other topics. The definition of "survey" includes gathering information using questionnaires as well as conducting and recording individual or group interviews, observations, measurement, and analysis of data. Surveys administered to FSIS populations or outside populations nearly always require data/respondent confidentiality.

B. The Office of Planning, Analysis and Risk Management (OPARM) is responsible for conducting surveys within FSIS. OPARM uses approved survey research and applied statistical approaches in designing and conducting surveys and in analyzing results, and administers techniques to protect confidentiality, such as limiting access to survey data and removing identifying information from survey records. OPARM maintains an annual survey agenda and schedule, and conducts follow up to improve response rates, and schedules surveys in a manner that aims to reduce duplicative information queries to respondents throughout each fiscal year.

IV. APPROVED SURVEY PLATFORMS

A. OPARM is responsible for reviewing and approving survey instruments and working with other program areas to schedule, design, and execute surveys, and analyze data collected. This includes, but is not limited to, surveys that are issued to populations larger than a program area; surveys where confidentiality or anonymity are necessary; or surveys where detailed statistical

analysis and reporting are required. FSIS currently retains a primary authorized and approved survey software package. This is a FSIS approved platform with internal processes and controls designed to protect respondent confidentiality.

B. Program areas may use other approved survey software (e.g., Microsoft Forms, SurveyMonkey) to issue internal surveys with a limited scope, such as for a staff or program area, or where confidentiality is not a necessary component. If program areas want to use other approved software to survey staff in other program areas or administer surveys that are more complex, program areas should contact OPARM to provide consultation on best practices for question development and analytical techniques. Program areas cannot use any unauthorized or unapproved survey software to administer surveys within or outside FSIS. Approved survey software can be found on the Office of the Chief Information Officers approved software list.

V. RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Requesting Program Area:

1. The requesting program area's Assistant Administrator (AA) or Deputy AA is to confirm agreement on the use of a survey as the most appropriate data collection instrument and on commencing any survey development and administration.
2. The requesting program area is to contact OPARM with the initial survey request through a request form, [FSIS Form 1360-18](#), and include a designated point-of-contact (POC). The form aids in creating a sound survey instrument, analysis approach, and reporting plan. Submit this form by emailing it to OPARMSPEB@usda.gov.
3. Once finalized, this form serves as a working agreement between OPARM and the requesting program area. Information required in the form is as follows:
 - a. The purpose of the survey and related background information;
 - b. The target audience, including whether the survey includes bargaining unit employees;
 - c. The proposed time period for administering the survey;
 - d. The nature of the analysis and reporting that the program area is requesting; and
 - e. The FSIS strategic goal, outcome, or objective that the survey supports.
4. The POC for the requesting program area is to facilitate all necessary approvals for the survey through their AA (or their designee).

B. OPARM:

1. Provides guidance to program areas on survey instrument development, survey distribution method, overall design, options for data analysis, and reporting. This includes question development, answer category development, ordering, timing, coding, administration, and analysis approaches to maximize use of the results.
2. If supporting an externally distributed survey, OPARM is to consult with the Office of Policy and Program Development (OPPD) to determine if a survey requires Office of Management and Budget (OMB) approval.

NOTE: OPPD is the POC for facilitating OMB approval. If applicable, OPARM completes an OMB Information Collection Request package for OMB approval and coordinates with OPPD on its submission.

3. Tests and approves all survey instruments before they are administered.
4. Takes one of two approaches on survey administration, as agreed to with the program area's designated POC:
 - a. Administers the survey through the survey software email distribution system; or
 - b. Oversees administration of the survey and provides the requesting program area with a link to share the survey through independent distribution channels.
5. Works with the program area to determine data analysis and reporting needs, which may include one or more of the following, as agreed to with the program area's designated POC:
 - a. Provides raw data to requesting program area, and performs internal peer-review of the program area's analysis, if requested;
 - b. Jointly conducts or collaborates on data analysis with the requesting program area; or
 - c. Provides internally peer-reviewed summary analysis reports on survey results to the requesting program area.
6. Provides guidance to the program area to publicize and promote the survey through Agency communications, which may include emails, newsletters, town halls, etc., to encourage survey participation.
7. Coordinates with the Labor and Employee Relations Division (LERD) in the Office of Management for all Agency surveys requiring National Joint Council (NJC) of Food Inspection Locals notification (i.e., surveys that include bargaining unit employees in the target audience).

VI. CONSIDERATIONS FOR BARGAINING UNIT EMPLOYEES

A. If it is determined by OPARM and LERD that some bargaining unit employees are included in the target audience of the survey, questionnaire, or data collection instrument:

1. LERD provides the NJC with advance notice before the survey start date, provides a copy of the survey instrument, and provides a copy of the survey results following the completion of the survey.
2. Program areas are to be aware that conducting interviews and focus groups are included in the survey category for NJC notification.

B. If the requesting program area determines that the survey, questionnaire, or data collection instrument will only be sent to non-bargaining unit employees, notification to the NJC is not required.

VII. QUESTIONS

Refer questions regarding this directive to OPARMSPEB@usda.gov.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rachel A. Edelstein". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Assistant Administrator
Office of Policy and Program Development