

## **The Written Survey**

The written questionnaire is used to obtain standardized information from a targeted sample. Written surveys directed toward school personnel are one way that a Linking Agent can gather vital information regarding the needs of the school. A systematic procedure for conducting the written needs assessment, including, careful attention toward question content and design, will help to facilitate a respondent's ability to accurately complete the survey. When the data obtained is comprehensive and accurate, a Linking Agent will be better able to use the results of the written needs assessment to direct policy and/or program decisions.

### **Steps in Conducting a Questionnaire Survey**

1. Define your objectives
2. Select a sample
3. Write the survey items
4. Construct/format the questionnaire
5. Pretest
6. Prepare a letter of transmittal
7. Send out your questionnaire and provide follow-up

### **Guidelines for Constructing Questionnaire Items**

1. Clarity is essential -- the question should mean the same thing to all respondents. Avoid terms like several, most, and usually have no precise meaning and should be avoided.
2. Short items are preferable.
3. Avoid negative items.
4. Avoid "double-barreled" items, which require a subject to respond to two separate ideas with a single answer.
5. Do not use technical words or jargon.
6. Avoid bias or leading questions.

### **Guidelines for Formatting the Questionnaire**

1. Make the questionnaire attractive - use colored ink, white space, and high quality reproduction.
2. Organize and lay out the questions to make it easy to read and move through the questions.
3. Number the questionnaire items and pages.
4. Put name and address of person to whom the form should be returned at the beginning and end of questionnaire.
5. Include brief and clear instructions, printed in bold type.
6. Use examples before any items that may be confusing.
7. Organize the questions in a logical sequence. For example, you may decide to group together related items (such as those that pertain to school environment or those that pertain to classroom instruction).
8. When moving to a new topic, include a transitional sentence to help respondents switch their trains of thoughts.
9. Begin the survey with a few non-threatening items.
10. Do not put important questions at the end of a long questionnaire.
11. Put threatening or difficult questions near the end of the questionnaire.

## The Use of Data from Needs Assessments

Data from written surveys, including written needs assessment, can be used to:

Describe a specific survey variable by percentage

Procedure

1. Count the frequency of responses for a given question
2. Calculate percentage of responses based upon entire sample

Example - 75% of faculty indicated that release time was a high need area.

Examine distribution patterns

Procedure

1. Calculate the frequency of responses for the entire set of survey questions.
2. Look for patterns or clusters of responses that may be based on the characteristics of respondents.

Example: If you are looking to identify patterns among faculty related to their level of experience, you may want to look at the difference in responses between faculty with less than five years of experience and those responses indicated by faculty with more than five years of experience.