

September 9, 2011

To Whom It May Concern,

Thank you for the feedback and guidance on our needs assessment survey to guide the manual development. Based on our discussion and the OMB guidance document on survey design, we have made significant changes to the supporting documents and survey such reducing the number of open ended items, rearranging response sets, and counter balancing categorical responses to reduce order effects. In addition to providing the two paragraph overview on web-based survey design, we have also programmed the survey in Survey Monkey for your review (<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/SACollaborationAssessment>). As discussed, since the surveys across professions (law enforcement, prevention, education) are similar, we modified and programmed one survey for law enforcement in Survey Monkey for your review. This will allow us to have a master version to include all modifications. Once the survey is approved, we will apply all your final recommendations to the other two versions of the survey.

Survey Design Overview

We will use the latest methods for survey administration and design to develop the provider web-based surveys (Dillman, 2007; Groves, Fowler, Couper et al, 2009). Whether a respondent will complete a long questionnaire is based on the level of responsibility, commitment and interests so keep important and crucial content early. Establishing trust with your participants is most important. Studies highlight that there are several important design considerations to take into account when developing surveys in general and in particular web surveys (Dillman, 2000; 2007; Tourangeau, Couper, and Conrad 2004, 2007). Some important general considerations include: a simple short descriptive title with all the sponsor information, make sure directions are included as a part of each section embedded in the section, make sure initial items are more general then get more specific, group similar questions to reduce cognitive burden, use design to group items, and pay close attention to page breaks, make the flow of the survey logical, using dark print for questions and light for response, blue and yellow backgrounds improve survey response rates, placing answer choices in similar places.

While the above apply to nearly all surveys, there are particular issues with web-based survey design. Studies highlight that the layout of the questions (Christian and Dillman 2004; Toepoel, Das, and Van Soest 2006), the grouping of related items on a single screen is likely to lead respondents to view the items as related entities, thus increasing the correlation among them (Tourangeau, Couper, and Conrad 2004, 2007; Dillman 2007). Significant variation can occur with web survey because of different formatting options as compared to web-based surveys and it is important to understand how these may impact outcomes. LozarManfreda, Batagelj, and Vehovar (2002) found that a one-page design results in higher item nonresponse than different pages and that there are optimal times to group items on separate pages. For example, Toepoel, Das, and van Soest (2009) participants react negatively to too many items on a screen and Couper et al., (2001) highlights using single and multiple item screens to capture

data. The layout of the actual questions and responses are important as well. Traditional surveys use horizontal responses but web-based surveys typically use vertical design. However, this can be problematic as Toepoel, Das Van Soest (2008) recommend using a linear horizontal layout without numbers for a five-point fully labeled rating scale when developing surveys based on their research. Moreover, response sets should be counterbalanced. There is also evidence that radio buttons are best at increasing response rates. While the research on optimal methods to develop and deliver web-based surveys is growing, we have a fair empirical base from which to develop the surveys for the current grant.