

TURN ON THE SCIENCE

Conducting Staff Surveys Considerations and Practices Department of Research, Evaluation and Audience Discovery Science Museum of Minnesota

The Department of Research, Evaluation and Audience Discovery has conducted staff surveys both internally, in our own organization, as well as for other informal educational institutions. We've also worked with and learned from other sites who have done the same. We share this resulting guidance in the spirit that others have shared their experience with us: in the hope that it will help others to do the best work they can.

Preparation

- 1) Consider the institutional culture and how change is embedded into the structure of the organization: are initiatives top-down, grassroots, or do they represent the institution cross-departmentally and across levels of status (full-, part-time, volunteer, etc.). What factors will influence staff's reception of the survey? If the survey is following a different path than other initiatives, extra explanation or support might be needed. How will you frame the survey and place it within the context of your organization's purpose, goals, mission, vision, etc.?
- 2) Consider how staff might interpret language before using it on a survey. People don't have to be "on board" with change initiatives, but there should be some shared understandings of what change means, and common terminologies as appropriate to the context. If most people won't recognize a word, consider not using it, or defining it carefully. If you decide to use a certain term, be clear/transparent about the reason(s) for doing so.
- 3) Develop and share the purpose and intention for the survey. Perhaps the survey is meant to be a "temperature check" to see where staff members are at in terms of their understandings of equity; perhaps the survey will point to areas where administration can focus its human resources, training, and/or public-serving programs.
- 4) For the team who is driving the survey implementation, take time to discuss and identify the strengths, challenges, and any other important factors of the makeup of your team as it relates to overall equity work within the organization. Who is part of your team and what are their roles/expectations when it comes to equity work? How will your team respond to existing power/status dynamics within the organization when administering this survey? How will your team handle resistance or indifference to the survey?
- 5) Identify the kinds of "asks" you are making of staff within the organization and how that impacts their role and position in the organization. What might be perceptions of staff within the



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TURN ON THE SCIENCE

organization who are viewed as “responsible” for change work, whether formally as part of their job description or informally as part of their identity, background, and/or experiences? Who is usually thought of when it comes to change work in the organization and will they be expected to become involved, and if yes, in what ways? Where is it appropriate to push for support and where may you need to provide support instead so as not to further exacerbate marginalization of certain groups? How will your team distribute the work so that no one person or a particular group of people are unduly burdened with moving this survey and overall change work forward within the organization?

6) Carefully consider the demographic categories you hope to ask about: are they necessary? Does examining the data through certain demographic characteristics have the potential to reveal the identities of participants? How should these questions be structured to reflect current terminologies? Should certain demographics not be linked to other items during analysis? How will this data be used?

7) Consider where you want support and messaging about the survey to come from within the institution and the resources you expect to put behind that push. Does this require coordination with managers or additional budget to support staff time to participate?

8) Carefully consider who within the organization you want to participate in the survey. Will you invite staff who are under the age of 18 to respond? If needed, do you have the resources to gather and track consent from parents/guardians? Will you be reaching out beyond paid staff to volunteers, or to contractors and partners who also work in your institutions’ space?

Survey Development

1) Use models from other institutions. Many cultural institutions have produced staff surveys; use these for inspiration and guidance, but always contextualize the survey to your cultural institution to ensure questions align with strategic goals or organizational values

2) Consider vesting cross-departmental groups with informing or developing the survey; the more change work is diffused across the institution, the more unified and engaged the institution is in applying the results to practices across the institution.

3) Document differences and similarities that arise among different groups while developing the survey. Is the same question or concern present in multiple parts of the organization? Are some questions or concern unique to certain groups? These insights can guide interpretation of results by providing a contextualized basis for analysis and help focus attention on findings when reporting.

4) Practice the questions with staff representatives from different departments and roles, engage in-house or external evaluators (if available) to help refine question/survey structure,



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and follow best practices in survey design. Ensure that questions make sense for varying staff contexts -- using logic or instructions to skip certain questions may be necessary.

5) Consider the platform and process for taking the survey that considers the needs and daily routines of ALL staff. Not all staff have access to computers to easily take a survey during their workday; not all staff work 9-5pm; and not all staff will be comfortable taking a survey in English.

6) Create and follow a timeline for developing, socializing, and proctoring the survey, as well as for analyzing and sharing the survey results.

7) Carefully consider the potential vulnerability of staff - particularly if there is a potential for identification through open-ended responses on the survey, or in how the data is analyzed (e.g. if analyzing the data both by ethnicity, gender and role in the institution and there are few individuals who have these same characteristics). Key questions include: how can we ensure the confidentiality of staff participants in both the taking of the survey, and in the analysis of the results? How should the data be restricted? Should the data be analyzed offsite?

8) If you plan to use an online platform to collect your survey (e.g., Survey Gizmo, Survey Monkey, Qualtrics), plan to have paper versions available, along with plans to enter and store responses collected in that way.

Communication

1) Communications about the survey should be both targeted and general. Everyone who is participating should receive advance and ongoing communications that encourage their participation. Consider a weekly “thermometer” that tracks progress.

2) Consider dedicating time during an All Staff meeting (or whatever format makes sense in your setting) to clearly articulate the purpose of the survey, reinforce the survey’s connection to the organization’s goals, and answer staff questions in an open forum. This time can also serve as an opportunity to explain the steps taken to ensure anonymity and to preview what it will be like to actually take the survey.

3) Consider a special information session for managers to help them determine the easiest ways (and those ensuring confidentiality) that they can support staff to take the survey. Managers can support methods that work best for their groups and can continue to encourage participation according to staff needs. Most importantly, always communicate that the survey is optional; do not coerce staff to take it. All leaders and managers need to reinforce this message.

4) Participants should know who will analyze the data, where it will be stored, and when they can expect to hear back about the results and potential action steps that have emerged (and/or are being considered by leadership) BEFORE taking the survey.



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Data Collection

- 1) Open the survey for a minimum of two weeks; step up communication about the survey during this time.
- 2) Consider the needs for translation, computer support, “open lab” sessions, and time during a regularly scheduled workday during the data collection period to ensure access and engagement in the survey. Consider special processes needed for particular roles (e.g. volunteer, part-time) in the institution.
- 3) Continually check on the functionality of the survey during the data collection period. It may be helpful to establish a person or team responsible for fielding questions or concerns about the functionality of the survey. This person’s name and contact information should be clearly associated with this role during initial communication and throughout the data collection period.

Data Analysis

- 1) Initial analysis of the raw survey data will ideally happen outside of the institution, or if occurring internally, restricted to a couple of individuals if absolutely necessary. There is great trust built by having analysis happen outside. There are often small evaluation or research groups that can be hired for a job of this size at reasonable rates. They would take the raw data and aggregate it according to guidelines developed by the museum team, so that no person within the museum could look at a single response or set of responses.
- 2) Consider the benefits of a core group of leaders, an institutional equity team, etc. doing a group analysis of the results from this analysis. This group can identify a common narrative that they see emerging from the data.
- 3) Revisit notes and documentation from the survey development process to help align analysis and reporting efforts. Considering which questions or concerns arose consistently among groups in the organization vs which were specific may be helpful framing for collective meaning-making and share out.
- 4) Do NOT analyze close-ended and open-ended data within individuals, but aggregate this data within a response. Consider all the open-ended responses within an item together, don’t consider an individual’s response to close-ended and open-ended responses; the chances for identification of individual identities increases. For example, it is appropriate to look at open-ended responses filtered to be only female-identifying respondents. It is inappropriate to look at a person’s response and also see that the respondent is female-identifying, a manager, and 25-34 years old.



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- 5) Roughly code open-ended responses into categories or buckets that are representative across responses; use the data analysis group to check that these categories or buckets work, and that the items chosen fit in them.

Sharing Results

- 1) Share results as soon as possible after the survey is taken.
- 2) Consider the chain of sharing that should take place in the institution to ensure unity and engagement in the survey process and results.
- 3) Share results in a variety of formats, including brief, graphic snapshots, as well as longer reports and question and answer sessions. Consider having a reference binder that staff can check out to view and consider the more detailed results. Consider working sessions with managerial staff to discuss application of the data to their work.
- 4) Presentations of results should include some reflection by administration, working groups, or leaders about the priorities they see in the data, and what action steps they have taken/are considering taking in response to the data.
- 5) Presentation of the data might be a brief summary of the themes that emerge from the data, with visuals (graphs, charts, graphics) to aid understanding, and a few representative quotes to give nuance and voice to the types of responses observed. Think about these presentations as a narrative about the current state of equity in the institution.



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Sample Staff Equity Survey: Questions and Responses

ID	Question Text
34	How much do you agree/disagree with the following statements? (<i>Strongly Disagree/Disagree/Agree/Strongly Agree</i>)
	a. Racial equity is relevant to the work I do at the Museum
	c. I am aware of actions SMM is taking towards greater racial equity.
	d. The Museum urgently needs to address racial equity practices that impact staff (for example, organizational culture).
	e. The Museum urgently needs to address racial equity practices that engage the public (for example, through exhibits and programs).
7	Have you participated in any of the following types of activities, workshops, or trainings around racial equity at SMM? (<i>Yes/No/Not Sure</i>)
	a. One Museum One Book (OMOB) *Participation includes suggesting, checking out, or reading a book; discussing topics; and/or watching associated videos. It is not just attending official discussions.
	b. Science House Professional Development Group Trainings (for example, LinCT and IPAGE).
	c. Talking Circles
	f. Life Long Learning (Instructor) training
	g. Human Resources sponsored training (for example, cultural competency webinar or workplace inclusion series)
	l. Front Line Enrichment
	m. Networking events (For example, diverse professionals event)
	n. Attending "It's Time to Talk Forum on Race"
	o. I am/have been part of a Race Forward working group
16	Do any of the following reasons make it hard for you to participate in a workshop, training, or activity around racial equity at SMM? (<i>Yes/No/Prefer not to answer</i>)
	a. I feel like racial equity is not relevant to what I do at the Museum.
	c. I feel like I do not have the time in my day to attend trainings, activities, or workshops around racial equity (i.e., I am too busy)
	e. The trainings, activities, or workshops do not occur when I am scheduled to be at the Museum.
	f. I am not aware of the opportunities to attend or participate in trainings, activities, or workshops around racial equity (at all or far enough in advance).
	h. In general, I am not interested in attending or participating in any training, activity, or workshop around racial equity.
	j. The trainings, activities, or workshops are not a good fit for me. The ways they are structured and presented don't reflect my needs.

26	Have any of the following made it easier for you to participate in a workshop or training around racial equity at SMM? (Yes/No/Prefer not to answer)
	a. Multiple opportunities to attend.
	b. Opportunities that are scheduled outside of the traditional 9-5; M-F time frame.
	c. Online viewing/participation opportunities.
	e. Able to charge time/participate on the clock.
	f. Encouragement/support from my manager.
	h. Getting information about how it supports the Museum's Strategic Plan
	i. Petri Dish posting, emails, and other internal communications about upcoming opportunities.
91	In the last year, have you changed any of your work practices because of something you've learned through activities, trainings, or workshops about racial equity/justice? (Yes/No/ I haven't gone to any trainings or workshops about racial equity/justice)
77	What about your work practices have you changed or are you thinking about changing? (Open response)
44	When you applied for your current position, did it seem like racial equity was a priority at SMM based on the job announcement, application, and/or interview? (Yes/No/I don't remember/Prefer not to answer)
49	How much to you agree or disagree that the Museum shows its commitment to racial equity through the following actions? (Strongly Disagree/Disagree/Agree/Strongly Agree/I'm not sure what this means)
	b. HR practices and policies (for example employee job description & performance reviews and providing the "quiet space" on levels 3M & 4M)
	c. Thinking about equity in the projects we pursue (this includes exhibits, business and community partnerships, vendor contracts, and grants).
	d. Hosting the RACE exhibition
	e. The equity resource table near the 4M break room (previously a talk-back space about the Philando Castille sign).
	g. The Museum's official messages to the public about racial equity and inclusivity (for example, the Statement of Equity, press releases, the website, and job postings).
	h. Equity-focused programming like Science Fusion events and Science Live Theater shows (<i>Race to the Finish Line</i> or <i>Fraction of the Whole</i>)
	i. Supporting Kitty Andersen Youth Science Center (KAYSC) programs like Project Me
54	How often do you feel uncomfortable at SMM because of your race/ethnicity? (Almost never/Occasionally/Frequently/Prefer not to answer)
109	If you're willing to share, what has contributed to your comfort or discomfort? (Open response)

141	How much do you agree/disagree with the following statements? (<i>Strongly disagree/Disagree/Agree/Strongly agree</i>)
	a. Equity is relevant to the work I do at the Museum
	b. I am aware of actions SMM is taking towards being more equitable.
	c. The museum urgently needs to address equity practices that impact staff (for example, organizational culture).
	d. The Museum urgently needs to address equity practices that engage the public (for example, through exhibits and programs).
139	In the last year, how much progress do you feel we've made towards greater racial equity in the Museum? *If you have been here less than 12 months, please consider your perception of progress during the time you have been with the Museum. (<i>None/Not much/Some/A lot</i>)
101	Is there anything else you'd like to share more about, or something that we didn't cover as part of the survey?

Role at SMM

63	Which of the following best describes your employment status? (<i>Volunteer/Part-time/Full-time</i>)		
62	How many years total have you been employed or volunteering at SMM? (<i>Less than 1/ 1-2 / 3-9 / 10-19 /More than 20</i>)		
112	In which division do you work? <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> - Mission Support (Finance) - STEM Equity and Education - Visitor Experience - Human Resources - Science </td> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> - Exhibits - Mission Advancement - Marketing and Brand Strategy - Revenue Management </td> </tr> </table>	- Mission Support (Finance) - STEM Equity and Education - Visitor Experience - Human Resources - Science	- Exhibits - Mission Advancement - Marketing and Brand Strategy - Revenue Management
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146	Do you have any suggestions or ideas about how the Museum could address other forms of identity-based equity? (<i>Open response</i>)		
57	Are you a manager? (<i>Yes/No/Prefer not to answer</i>)		

Demographics

135	Which of the following gender identities apply to you? (please check all that apply) (<i>Woman/Man/Transgender/Non-binary/Prefer not to answer</i>)		
66	What percentage of time in your daily role is devoted to interacting with visitors or otherwise being visitor-facing on site at the Museum? (<i>Less than 25%/ 25% - 49% / 50% - 74% / 75% - 100%</i>)		
58	How old are you? <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> - under 18 - 18 - 24 - 25 - 29 - 30 - 34 - 35 - 39 - 40 - 44 </td> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> - 45 - 49 - 50 - 54 - 55 - 59 - 60 - 64 - 65 + - Prefer not to answer </td> </tr> </table>	- under 18 - 18 - 24 - 25 - 29 - 30 - 34 - 35 - 39 - 40 - 44	- 45 - 49 - 50 - 54 - 55 - 59 - 60 - 64 - 65 + - Prefer not to answer
- under 18 - 18 - 24 - 25 - 29 - 30 - 34 - 35 - 39 - 40 - 44	- 45 - 49 - 50 - 54 - 55 - 59 - 60 - 64 - 65 + - Prefer not to answer		
60/61	Which of the following racial/ethnic identities apply to you? (please check all that apply) - American Indian/Native/American/Alaskan Native - Asian - Black/African-American - Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander - White or Caucasian - Multiracial (unspecified) - Unsure - I identify with a group not listed here: (write in) - Prefer not to answer - Hispanic/Latinx (was asked as separate question, folded into this as one option)		