

Section / Division Surveys

In July 2003 the NCBA started using SurveyMonkey's web-based survey services and over 80 surveys have been sent since then. This inexpensive service enables NCBA staff members to create user-friendly web-based surveys that can be transmitted to 1,000's of members within minutes with a link to the survey that can be accessed at any time to review the results, etc. SurveyMonkey also automatically collects the results, which can be viewed in graph and chart summaries, as individual responses, and/or downloaded for further analysis and to create reports.

The process for submitting requests to create and transmit surveys is:

1. **Identify the information you need and what it will be used for.** Identifying the information that you want and what you will do with it in the beginning is important, because this planning forms the basis for the rest of the survey's development. It will also help ensure that meaningful information is collected and members are more likely to participate in a survey if the results are useful and then reported to them.
2. **Identify whom you want to collect the information from and for how long.** Surveys are normally designed for a specific section/division and timeframe. However, other groups of NCBA members can be added to a survey, as required. **Be advised:**
 - a. Web-based surveys are restricted to members with Internet access AND that the NCBA has a current email address for, since the survey is announced via email. Surveys can be mailed to members without email addresses; however this takes longer and requires manual processing of the responses. **NOTE:** *The typical survey response rate is 20-30%.*
 - b. LISTSERV participation is voluntary, so LISTSERVs DO NOT include ALL of the section/division active members (e.g., average participation is 30%). Therefore, **eMill**, the NCBA's broadcast email system, is the **best option** to use for contacting ALL section /division members as long as they have given the NCBA their **current** email address.
 - c. **Survey responses can be restricted to:**
 - i. Specific members/groups by using password-protected access, which needs to be identified in the original survey request.
 - ii. A single response per person with or without password-protection, as long as they use the same computer (i.e., checks computer's Web "cookie" for location & login info).
 - d. The survey start and stop dates can be set up to allow participation during a specific time, and access will be automatically "closed" on the stop date.
3. **Create survey questions that are easy to answer and analyze.** Creating effective survey questions is very important because user-friendly questions that collect information that can be easily analyzed will make the survey more valuable to its participants and developers. SurveyMonkey has 11 different types of questions and formats including questions with single and multiple answers, matrices and open-ended responses for written answers. **NOTE:** *A "SurveyMonkey How To" user's manual is in this reference manual and it includes descriptions of the types of survey questions available and how to use them.*

Tips for creating effective survey questions:

- a. **Use questions with choices.** Using questions with choices simplifies data collection and analysis, because the results are automatically tabulated for viewing online or downloading for analysis and to create reports.
 - b. **Limit open-ended questions.** Replies to open-ended questions are also automatically collected, however they must be analyzed individually, which takes longer and the results are subject to interpretation by the reviewer. Therefore, it is recommended that the number of open-ended questions be limited.
 - c. **Limit the number of questions per page.** Limiting the number of questions displayed to one (1) or two (2) per page prevents respondents from having to scroll down to see the next question. This saves time and could avoid a question being skipped if it was never seen.
 - d. **Require answers for essential questions.** Requiring answers to ALL questions is probably NOT required and NOT recommended, however it is a good idea to require information that is considered essential to the survey. **NOTE:** *Asking participants to provide their name and contact information can help with post-survey follow-up, however requiring this information precludes anonymous participation.*
 - e. **Skipping Questions.** A respondent's question "path" can be customized to automatically skip non-applicable questions to reduce confusion, "drop-outs" and survey completion time.
4. **Schedule the survey creation and survey announcement ASAP.** Surveys are normally easy to create and staff members can transmit survey announcements to 1,000's of members within minutes using eMill, the NCBA's broadcast email system. However, the number of requests for surveys is increasing and only two (2) IT staff members can create surveys and download the survey results, and only two (2) Communication staff members can create and transmit the survey announcement message. Therefore, it is important to consider the following when submitting a survey request.
- a. Submit requests **at least two (2) business days prior to the intended transmission date.** The required advanced notice:
 - i. Provides time to review and test the survey questions before they are forwarded to the respondents.
 - ii. Helps make sure the survey announcement message is reviewed, tested and sent on time to the correct group of members.
 - iii. **Needs to be longer** for more complex surveys, or when other projects are due at the same time, since surveys and broadcast emails are only two of the duties assigned to these NCBA staff members.
 - iv. Allows management of emails sent to large groups of members to preclude sending several emails to the same group(s) on the same day, which could be perceived as being spammed by the NCBA.
 - b. The **survey and survey announcement message should be sent to the assigned staff liaison**, so they can make sure they are created on time and sent to the correct group of members. The staff liaison is also responsible for scheduling the survey announcement

and collecting the documentation required to create the survey and survey announcement message.

- c. An **effective survey announcement message is critical**, since it helps convince your members to complete the survey. Therefore, keep the following items in mind when creating the survey announcement message:
 - i. The survey's **originator and subject/topic should be businesslike and direct**, and avoid all appearances of junk mail or "spam."
 - ii. The **message** should be **brief** but also **explain why** the survey is being done, and **how the results will be used** to justify why it is worth the respondent's time to participate.
 - iii. **Use plain text messages** and **avoid** using **color, differentiating text**, and **especially attachments**, because attachments (1) significantly slow down email transmission and (2) the survey announcement might NOT be delivered, since viruses are frequently sent as attachments and many computer networks are set up to block emails with attachments.

NOTE: An "NCBA Surveys User Manual" is in this reference manual and it provides additional guidance on how to create survey announcement messages.

5. **Review and analyze the survey results.** Authorized staff and members can view the survey results as they are collected. IT Staff members can also control which results are visible and how they can be used (e.g., read only, downloadable) to protect sensitive information. The online results have graph and chart summaries, as well as the ability to review individual responses. The survey results can also be:
 - a. **Downloaded.** You can download your results into Excel or HTML files for further analysis and to create graphs/reports. Plus, you can save them on your personal computer for future reference.
 - b. **Filtered.** Survey result filters can be set up to help analyze demographic and other information by finding patterns of how respondents answered specific questions (e.g., Show me the respondents that answered choice "x" to question "y."). *NOTE: Filters can be valuable tools, however they take time to set up and run, so keep that in mind when requesting them.*
6. **Cost.** There is normally NO charge for creating/sending surveys and the associated broadcast email announcement message. However, the time to create, transmit and download some surveys will have to be paid for if it is (a) a long or complicated survey, (b) transmitted to large number of people, and/or (c) if a particular section/division requests many surveys during a fiscal year. *NOTE: There is no restriction on the number of surveys that the NCBA can create, however SurveyMonkey charges extra if we exceed 1,000 survey replies in a month. The extra charge is paid by the group(s) that received the extra replies.*

Questions. The section's/division's staff liaison is the primary contact for creating and scheduling a survey, as well as creating and scheduling the associated survey broadcast email announcement message. The NCBA's IT staff creates the survey and our Communication staff sends the survey's announcement message. The normal working hours for NCBA staff members are 9 am to 5 pm, Monday through Friday. Any staff member can be reached by calling 919-677-0561 or 1-800-662-7407, and emails to the IT staff should be sent to support@ncbar.org.