

research in brief

Citizen Surveys

Why does a community survey? The authors suggest that community developers better have their objectives clearly in mind before the survey gets underway. Doing one because county "x" did one or because some citizen group suggests it isn't a good enough reason.

Managing a survey should be purposeful business. Different survey techniques, different people to be surveyed, and different report-back systems are needed depending on the predetermined purpose for conducting the survey.

The authors suggest four survey objectives and make the point that only one objective (of their four) can be focused on at one time. Their four objectives for doing a community survey are: (1) identify problems and priorities for action, (2) identify positions of crucial local organizations (toward an issue or proposed solution), (3) enhance support for locally initiated community improvement efforts, and (4) maintain residents' sense of community.

The authors further suggest separating out the first objective, for survey planning purposes, and focusing on identifying concerns or identifying "action preferences."

Each of the suggested objectives are presented in light of the following survey management decisions: the principle thrust of the survey, the primary audience for whom the results are intended, inputs of the community into survey design and implementation, topics included in the questionnaire, and people to be canvassed for response (surveyed).

The article contains an extensive bibliography of survey designs, techniques, sampling, etc.

"Citizen Opinion Surveys and Effective CD Efforts."

Brian F. Blake, Ned Kalb, and Vernon Ryan.

Journal of Community Development Society, VIII (Fall, 1977), 92-104.

Del Dyer