Community Surveys

A community survey is a tool that can be used to help engage the community by identifying priorities and assess infrastructure options as part of a feasibility study. These goals are best accomplished after the community has been educated on broadband.

A survey can be designed to assess the lack of broadband and interest in improvements, or to assess the interest in a broadband solution and willingness to pay. A survey can be a great way to generate buzz about broadband and contribute to community outreach.

Planning the survey

- Determine the purpose of the survey, which should be what drives the survey design; don't just copy other surveys: What information do you need to collect?
- Determine how the results will be used and what response rate is required.
- Design around the survey takers' characteristics/needs.
- Determine the cost/budget limitations.

Choosing a survey mode

- Internet surveys are the cheapest, but only those who have internet already are likely to respond. Engage libraries to get more people to participate.
- Hard copies could be mailed with tax bills (but might not go to the actual resident) versus mailing to the premise (which might not go to the individual who has authority to subscribe to internet service).
- Door-to-door is very expensive, but improves response rate and community engagement in the broadband project.
- Phone surveys are more difficult given cellphone users, and it's more difficult to avoid duplicated results from multiple respondents in the same premise.

Designing the survey

- From survey title, to introduction, to series of questions: frame the content to the community's interests/concerns. "Broadband" is not a known term and even "internet" can disinterest people. Frame the survey around a broader community goal/concern that people care about, e.g., attracting residents, increasing job opportunities, supporting businesses, improving education and health access.
- Include a confidentiality statement. Being truly anonymous is unlikely and shouldn't be promised.
- Questions must be clear, and the survey must be short, to keep attention of respondents and increase completion/response rate.
- Background information should persuade participant to respond, but information provided ahead of questions will influence responses to subsequent questions.
- Surveying expertise in customer-satisfaction or willingness-to-pay questions is required to avoid biases and help ensure good response rate.
- All personal/demographic/identifier questions should be at the end to increase completion/response rate.
- Include contact information for the broadband working group, and consider having a text box for respondents to provide contact information if they want to become more involved.

Resources available

- Island Institute staff can assist with any stage of the survey process. Contact us early to plan a survey that will meet your needs.
- We can host your internet-based survey with our SurveyMonkey account if you don't need more than 1,000 responses.
- We'll provide a version to be printed for hard copies, if we host your internet-based survey, and we'll sythensize the results from internet responses.

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For more information and support on community surveys, contact Stephenie, smaclagan@islandinstitute.org and visit the Broadband Resource: http://www.islandinstitute.org/resource/broadband-island-and-coastal-sustainability

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