

Making good surveys

1. What do you want to find out? Who to ask?

Surveys are a practicable and straightforward way to gather people's opinions. First of all, decide:

- What you want to find out
- Who you are going to ask

Your survey needs to have a specific aim, for example to find out what improvements people think could be made to the church, or their opinions on a heritage activity they have attended.

Refer back to your church's Action Plan and the intended aims and outcomes of each strand of your project. Write your questions to see whether the outcomes have been achieved or not, and to find out whether any unexpected outcomes have occurred.

Keep your survey short – only ask what you really need to know about. People may not complete all the survey if it is too long.

Who you will ask (your target audience for the survey) will determine how you ask the questions. For example, if you are developing a family trail, you will want to find out the children's views in a child-friendly way, as well as asking the adults what they think.

Section 5 of the HLF Evaluation guidance has examples of who to ask, and how:

<https://www.hlf.org.uk/evaluation-guidance>

There is lots of information about collecting evidence here:

<http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/learn-how-collect-evidence>

2. When not to use surveys

Remember that some people do not find reading and writing easy – they may have dyslexia, not have English as their first language, or they may have a broken arm and be unable to write with their usual hand. So think about **other ways** that people can express their opinions, for example:

- Taking photographs (with their mobile phones or cameras)
- Discussion / conversation / interviews
- Voting with tokens

- Very short comments on e.g. post-it notes, luggage labels

You might want to find out in more depth about people's views on a particular topic, in which case a focus group or discussion session would be appropriate – see more in **Focus Groups**.

3. How many people to ask

Asking the congregation / church members

Try and get responses from all the congregation / church members so that everyone's views are taken into account, but respect people's wishes if they do not wish to respond to the survey.

For a heritage activity

If 10 people attend a heritage activity, ideally you need responses from all 10 participants. You can achieve this by giving everyone a short set of questions to complete at the end of the activity, for example.

For a general visitor survey

If you want to do a survey with general visitors to the church, it may not be practicable to get everyone to complete a survey. If you know how many visitors you get per month, use an online sample size calculator <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/mp/sample-size-calculator/> to work out how many you need to survey. (Use 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. See also <https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/sample-size/> for more of an explanation.) Survey that number of people over a one-month period.

For a survey amongst local residents

Find out how many people live in the area and use the sample size calculator above to work out how many responses will give you a valid response rate, i.e. there are enough responses to reflect the views of the population as a whole. It is accepted that 10% is a good response rate for surveys sent to people with little or no connection with the organisation.

4. Asking good questions

A good survey needs:

- Questions which are easy to understand and answer
- Start with easy questions to set the scene
- Use a combination of:
 - Closed questions – Yes, No, Don't know; multiple choice questions (with an option for "Other – please describe")
 - Open questions – people can give answers in their own words
 - Use rating scales where appropriate for agreement with statements (e.g. Strongly agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly disagree)
- Only ask one question at a time – don't ask "What could the church do to benefit visitors and the local community?" Better to ask two separate questions: "What

could the church do to benefit visitors?” and “What could the church do to benefit the local community?”

- Include demographics questions (age, gender, etc) at the end of the survey

The HLF Evaluation guidance has a Question Bank of questions which you can adapt to your church’s project: <https://www.hlf.org.uk/evaluation-guidance>

Always try out your survey questions with colleagues / friends / family to make sure that the questions make sense and flow in a logical manner.

The Survey Monkey website provides lots of advice and help in all aspects of surveys: https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/survey-guidelines/?ut_source=header .

5. Surveys – on paper and online

People can fill in the surveys on paper or online:

- On paper – print copies and give them to visitors and activity participants in church
- Online – give people the survey link and they can complete the survey on their smartphones, on a tablet or on their computer at home

	Advantages	Disadvantages
Paper surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once printed, only paper and pen or pencil required • Easy to complete, no need to be able to use computer or smartphone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stock of survey forms required – need for printing • Best if people complete them in church – they might not send them back, if they take them away • It takes longer to enter all the survey responses into a spreadsheet or Survey Monkey
Online surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No need for printing • People can complete the survey in church (e.g. on their smartphone, or on the church’s tablet if it has one, if there is internet access via mobile or wifi) or at home • Responses automatically collated and analysed by Survey Monkey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People need access to the internet (via mobile signal, wifi or fixed broadband, at church or at home) • People need to be confident to use the technology

6. Surveys – completion with a volunteer, and self-completion

You can leave surveys in the church for visitors to complete themselves, or you can take a more structured approach and have a volunteer ask people to complete the surveys. Both approaches have advantages and disadvantages:

Self-completion or face-to-face?

For some methods, visitors can complete the questions by themselves (e.g. visitors' books, online surveys, comments cards). Others, e.g. surveys, participatory activities, need a member of the church's project team to carry them out. Both have advantages and disadvantages:

	<i>Advantages</i>	<i>Disadvantages</i>
Self-completion	Can be completed in church when no volunteers / staff there	People have to be sufficiently motivated to respond
	People can complete questions in their own time	People may misunderstand questions, or not answer them all
Face-to-face	Can ask people to respond, to get more responses	Needs a member of the project team to be present
	Can achieve random sample of respondents	People may not wish to spend time answering questions
	Surveyor can check details with respondents	People may not wish to give responses to a person

7. Survey Monkey

Survey Monkey is an easy-to-use online method of creating, sending out and analysing surveys: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/>

You can set up a free account which lets you create surveys of up to 10 questions, and receive up to 100 responses. However, you cannot export the data, e.g. copy charts into a report. (There is a work-around which involves taking a screen shot and cropping the image so that you can paste the chart into a report.)

Alternatively, if you want to have more questions in your survey and export the data, you can take out a subscription for one month (or more) at a time, currently £26 per month. When your subscription expires, you do not lose the data, and you can renew the subscription again.

You need an internet connection to use Survey Monkey, so it may not be practicable to use it in the church. An alternative is Quick Tap Survey – see below.

The Survey Monkey website provides lots of advice and help in all aspects of surveys: https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/survey-guidelines/?ut_source=header . The guidance on good survey design is relevant to all types of survey (paper and online), as well as the instructions for how to set up and use a Survey Monkey survey.

This is the link to the Inspired Futures General Visitor Survey in Survey Monkey: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/BHG39LY> , as an example of how the survey is set up, so you can set up your own if you wish. You can have a go at completing it to see how it works.

8. Quick Tap Survey

Quick Tap Survey is an online survey service which you can also use off-line – somewhere where there is no internet access: <http://www.quicktapsurvey.com/> . If there is not internet access in the church, you can use Quick Tap Survey on a tablet or mobile phone (which has to be registered to the Quick Tap Survey account) to collect responses. When the device is connected to the internet, the responses are uploaded to the survey. The pricing structure is a bit more complex than with Survey Monkey, and you have to follow a precise procedure to avoid losing your data if you cancel your subscription.

9. Analysing responses and reporting on the findings

Once you have collected all the survey responses, you need to analyse them, see what people are telling you, and report on the findings in a clear way which will be useful for your project.

Your end-of-project report will be a record of the project's success, and will provide evidence for your future plans and for supporting future funding bids.

See [Analysing and Reporting](#) for more details.