

**SUBJECT:** Governance and Organization

**PROCEDURE:** 110.1.1 Surveys

**EFFECTIVE:** November 2011     **REVISED:**

**REVIEWED:** August 2023

Individuals and offices wishing to conduct a survey that is covered by the survey policy must complete and submit the survey request form, which can be found on the institutional research web site: <http://www.gfcmsu.edu/IR/>

Information required for the application includes, but is not limited to:

- Description of the survey project, including purpose and intended use of results.
- Specific population receiving the survey
- Method of survey distribution (online, hard copy, via email, etc.)
- Time frame for administering the survey.
- Evidence of MSU–IRB approval (if required).
- Description of any planned incentive program for respondents.
- Current draft of the survey and all invitation and cover letters.

Applicants must submit the completed survey request form to the research analyst. If a recurring survey has been approved in an earlier year, it will be necessary only to submit information about the proposed administration dates. Surveys that had been approved in prior years, but which have been significantly changed, must be re-approved. If a survey is approved by the MSU–IRB, the research analyst will accept the MSU–IRB protocol in lieu of the survey request form.

The research analyst will review the survey application and provide a response to the applicant within five (5) business days of the date the proposal was received.

### **Guidelines for Conducting a Survey**

All surveys conducted at GFC MSU should adhere to the following guidelines:

#### **The Rights of Respondents**

- The survey form must include “contact information” (name, email address, phone number) should the respondents have any questions about the content of the form or about the use and/or publication of survey results.
- All participants must be notified that their participation is voluntary.
- Respondents must be notified in advance if data collected will not be anonymous.
- Respondents must be protected from risk of unreasonable harm, including any risks regarding confidentiality or privacy.
- If your survey will include academic or contact information for students, you may be subject to Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Acts (FERPA) regulations. Non-public student data can be used without the student’s consent by college employees for “legitimate educational” purposes provided the data are not reported in such a way that individual students can be identified. All other users must receive written consent from the students to access non-public student data.
- A summary should be made available on request to persons who completed the survey.
- Respondents should be informed if the data or survey results will be published or distributed, including whether individual responses will appear in the published results.
- In some circumstances, data may be confidential and may not be made available publicly or to the respondents. Any such limitation should be made clear to respondents at the time the survey is conducted, as well as within

the report itself. When restrictions apply, publication and/or presentation of survey results must honor the stated restrictions.

- If subjects are promised anonymity and a login is required to access the survey, the researcher must ensure that login information will not be collected and stored in a way that it can be connected to survey results.

### **Sponsorship**

- All surveys should clearly identify the group or person who is conducting the survey.
- Information from surveys conducted by administrative offices, faculty committees, and other college committees are the property of GFC MSU. The researcher, department, unit, or committee responsible for conducting the survey must be consulted prior to the release and distribution of the survey's findings.
- The use of mass emailing lists to promote or distribute a survey to GFC MSU faculty, staff, or students is limited to official surveys approved by the GFC MSU administration. Appropriate individuals or offices must first approve these surveys. Please contact the research analyst for more information.

### **Confidentiality**

- Personally identifiable information should be collected only as required in relation to the expressly stated purpose of research or a project.
- The use of prizes or other incentives to encourage participation typically requires the collection of personal information from the respondents (i.e. name or email address). If the respondents have been promised anonymity, collection of this information may appear to be a violation of the promise. Two methods are typically used to circumvent this apparent conflict:
  - Respondents can be assured that their participation and responses will be confidential, but not anonymous. In this sense, "confidentiality" means that none of the information collected can be associated with a specific individual.
  - A double-blind procedure is developed in which a second party ensures that the analyst does not see any personally-identifiable information.

### **Data Security**

- The person conducting a survey is responsible for managing and releasing the data collected. Raw data from surveys are typically not shared with people outside of GFC MSU except under special circumstances. If survey data is shared, the data should not contain any information that will identify a respondent and its release must be approved by the appropriate cabinet member.
- If the survey is hosted by an off-campus site, the researcher is responsible for the security and privacy of the data. Thus the investigator should ensure that the external host system provides security in both data transfer and storage.

### **Use of E-mail for Administering Surveys**

- E-mail is a convenient and effective way to contact and communicate with potential research subjects; however, e-mail is a fundamentally insecure medium. In short, subjects cannot be assured of the confidentiality of their data in e-mail surveys.
- E-mail may be safely used as a vehicle only to contact potential subjects, who may then be given the option to (a) print and return an anonymous survey via campus or surface mail, or (b) go to a web link to complete an online survey.

### **Survey Publicity**

- The survey requestor is responsible for initiating all publicity for their survey. Surveys can be publicized through media such as e-mail, message boards, and posters.