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Survey Nonresponse Planning and Bias Assessment Document

| Survey Title | Type title here |
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| Purpose | (1) Record the steps taken to (a) assess nonresponse potential and (b) plan for nonresponse follow-up and mitigation, (2) record the response rates and results of nonresponse strategies, (3) note reporting caveats based on nonresponse findings, and (4) record the overall assessment of the survey data with respect to nonresponse. |
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This document applies to probability sample (and census) surveys conducted by GAO, and may also be used as a guide for evaluating surveys conducted by other agencies or organizations.

- This form is intended as a template and should be expanded as necessary for individual items.
- Follow this link to ARM guidance for more information before completing this document:
["Addressing Nonresponse and Nonresponse Bias Issues in Surveys."](#)

1. Survey population: _____

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| PLANNING |
|-----------------|

2. Steps taken to assess nonresponse potential (check all that apply).

- Assessed characteristics of survey population (Indicate below the risk group population falls into).
 - Low risk population (strong GAO access to the population, and population is familiar with GAO - e.g., federal agencies)
 - Medium risk population (SOME access and familiarity - e.g., state/local governments, programs receiving federal funds)
 - High risk population (LOW access and familiarity - e.g., private industry, general population or other specialty populations of individuals)

- Reviewed response rates for past GAO surveys of this population
- Reviewed response rates of other surveys of this population
- Reviewed response rates of surveys of similar populations
- Discussed response rate history/likelihood with agency/other officials who have surveyed this population

(Indicate below the most common response rate range or likelihood from these surveys)

- 80% or higher
- 60% - 79%
- Below 60%

- Considered response rate risk factors (check all that apply)

- Survey is long
- Survey has many open-ended questions
- Survey asks complex or sensitive questions
- Survey has a complex visual layout (e.g., multiple nested table questions)
- Survey asks substantially more data than opinion questions
- Survey must go through intermediaries or to multiple people to develop responses
- Respondent availability likely to be low (e.g., busy season)
- Respondent interest/willingness likely to be low
- Respondent contact information is outdated or only for a role/position (not personalized)
- Respondents are frequently or recently surveyed by GAO
- Pretesting suggests low response rates
- Nonrespondent followup requires GAO team efforts (rather than contractor calls)
- Field period is short
- Surveys will go to a large number of respondents (> 50 for census and > 1000 for sample)
- Survey mode is RDD telephone
- Other factor suggesting risk of significant nonresponse: _____

- Other steps: _____

3. Based on your findings from question 2, do you anticipate at least an 80% response rate without significant follow up efforts?

(If you checked "medium" or "high risk" for your population, and/or below 80% for common response range, and/or more than 3 response risk factors, you should check "no" below.)

- Yes
- No

4. Based on your findings from question 2, do you anticipate at least an 80% response rate without significant follow up efforts for all strata, if any, in your sample?

- Yes
- No

5. Planned nonresponse mitigation strategies (check all that apply).

(Level of planned mitigation should be tagged to risk of nonresponse and criticality of information.)

- Pre-notification
- Incentives - describe: _____ (or refer to DM# of record of survey administration document)
- Endorsements from third parties - describe: _____
- Get respondent buy-in (e.g., management persuasion, invoke GAO access authority) - describe: _____
- Minimization of respondent burden - describe: _____
- Multiple modes (sequentially, or offer simultaneously) - describe: _____
- Data collection with proxies (e.g., redirect requests to more available respondent)
- Follow up mailings or emails
- Follow up phone calls to request completion
- Follow up phone calls to collect responses on key questions
- Lengthen field period
- Establish or strengthen confidentiality pledge
- Other: _____

RESULTS

6. Survey response rates

Documentation reference: _____

_____ % Overall response rate
Response rates for strata
(Add strata below as necessary)

_____ % Stratum 1: _____
_____ % Stratum 2: _____
_____ % Stratum 3: _____

_____ % Item nonresponse range

7. Notes on nonresponse and successes/problems with nonresponse mitigation strategies.

NONRESPONSE BIAS ASSESSMENT

8. Steps taken to assess nonresponse bias.

(Indicate only those steps performed; all steps are not required for every engagement.)

Documentation reference: _____

- Compare respondents to population/sample/subset of sample on auxiliary variables related to survey variables - describe: _____
- Benchmarking against independent estimates (corroboration) - describe: _____
- Compare response rates across subgroups - describe: _____
- Intensive followup of subset of nonrespondents (two-phase sampling) to compare to respondents
- Alternative weighting (compare estimates with and without nonresponse adjustment)
- "What if" simulation of upper and lower bounds of potential bias
- Time of return analysis
- Other - describe: : _____

9. Based on the results of the assessment, what nonresponse bias concerns apply?

10. Steps taken to mitigate nonresponse bias

(Indicate only those steps performed; all steps are not required for every engagement.)

Documentation reference: _____

- Weighting adjustments
- Imputation
 - Deductive
 - Cell mean
 - Hot deck
 - Regression
- Other - describe: _____

11. Briefly summarize the collective findings on nonresponse bias and the mitigation strategies taken. Note the resulting reporting caveats or ways the survey data should not be used.

ASSESSMENT

12. How the data will be used in final product (Check all that apply.)

- Sole support for findings, conclusions, or recommendations
- One of multiple sources of evidence for findings, conclusions, or recommendations
- Background

13. Assessment decision as to the sufficiency of survey data with respect to nonresponse bias: (Check one.)

- Use all results/estimates (no nonresponse bias concerns)
- Use selected results/estimates (item nonresponse bias concerns)
- Use selected results/estimates with caveats (possible nonresponse bias)

- Do not make estimates (significant nonresponse bias in sample survey)

- Do not use survey results at all (significant nonresponse bias in census survey)

Approval by Assistant Director for Engagement: _____