



EDMONTON POLICE SERVICE

REPORT TO THE EDMONTON POLICE COMMISSION

DATE: March 28, 2017

SUBJECT: 2018 Citizen Survey Preparation

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That the 2018 and subsequent iterations of the Citizen Survey should transition from being administered by telephone to being administered online to gain cost efficiencies

BACKGROUND:

As per Alberta Policing Standard OM 1.1, the Edmonton Police Service (EPS) conducts a biennial Citizen Survey to identify community issues, perceptions and priorities that Edmontonians have with respect to crime, disorder and neighbourhood safety. The survey also provides citizens with an opportunity to provide feedback on the level of satisfaction with the policing services provided relative to their expectations. The previous survey involved contracting *Advanis Inc*; however, the contract to work with this vendor expired at the end of the 2016 survey. As such, EPS needs to consider how to proceed with future iterations of the survey.

CONSIDERATIONS

Currently, the the Office of Strategy Management Division is required to find approximately \$40 000 in efficiencies annually. By administering the survey online rather than using an external vendor to administer the survey via telephone, the division would save approximately \$30 000 every two years, or \$15 000 annually, representing 37.5% of the efficiencies the division is required to realize.

Additionally, the use of insight panels is an emerging practice in the public sector. The City of Edmonton is one of the first civic entities in North America to utilize an insight panel to collect feedback from citizens to make data-driven decisions. Further, in 2016 EPS was one of the first policing agencies in Canada to pilot an online version of their citizen survey and compare the findings with telephone results. Key takeaways from the pilot are as follows:

- 3197 respondents completed the online survey (1702 completed the survey through the insight panel and 1495 completed through EPS social media links), compared to 1367 who completed the phone survey. This represents a 134% increase in the number of respondents between administration methods. While the additional respondents have no significant impact on margin of error, there is a benefit in being able to engage and reach more citizens to solicit their feedback.
- As anticipated, results trended in a similar direction in both the online and telephone data; however, the magnitude of the responses differed among administration methods. For example, while respondents in the online and telephone platforms indicated confidence in the EPS, those completing the telephone survey were more likely to have higher levels of confidence.

Further, the City of Edmonton has had opportunity to administer surveys using its Insight Community in conjunction with more traditional telephone administration for its 2016 *City of Edmonton Measuring Progress Survey*, which is designed to understand perceptions on key measures relating to the quality of life in Edmonton. Results of the phone survey are generally comparable to those of its online counterpart, with differences in magnitude of response similar to those found in the Citizen Survey.

In addition to the administration of the initial survey, the Insight Community tool allows the opportunity to employ in-depth follow-up with respondents to gain deeper understanding of their responses (i.e., if a subsection of respondents indicate that they do not feel safe walking alone in their neighbourhood at night, EPS would have the ability to ask more targeted questions of this specific group after the initial survey had concluded).

Though there are potential benefits to utilizing the Insight Community, potential drawbacks also exist. The following table summarizes the pros and cons of both online surveys and telephone surveys. This table draws on existing research on survey and questionnaire administration.

Benefits	Drawbacks
<p>Phone Survey</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statistical confidence that the results can be generalized to the entire population within a certain margin of error • The sample can be weighted and stratified by age, gender, and police division • Respondents represent a more random sample than an online survey • The use of an external vendor to conduct the survey via telephone would mitigate any concerns of EPS bias in collecting and analysing their own data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost: The survey costs approximately \$30 000 every two years to administer via telephone. • Reaching respondents by telephone is becoming increasingly difficult. People are less likely to answer calls from phone numbers they don't recognize and more likely to subscribe to no-call lists. As such, costs to administer telephone surveys are likely to increase due to the increased number of phone calls required to reach the targeted sample size. • Likely prone to <i>Social Desirability Bias</i>: The tendency to over-report socially desirable characteristics or behaviours in one self and under-report socially undesirable characteristics or behaviours. Respondents may be less likely to answer questions honestly (i.e., "Have you had contact with the police in the last 12 months?")
<p>Online Survey</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to engage more citizens. • Responses collected from this survey can be compared with data from other Insight Community questionnaires to gain deeper understanding of data • Cost-effective and efficient means to collect large amounts of public feedback in a short period of time • The survey does not need to be completed in one sitting. Respondents have the opportunity to save their progress and complete at a later time • Feedback collected can be more in-depth and can be tracked over time • Similar to the phone survey, the online sample can be weighted and stratified by age, gender, and police division 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likely prone to <i>Selection Bias</i>: Those individuals who are highly motivated to respond, typically individuals who have strong opinions, are overrepresented, and individuals that are indifferent or apathetic are less likely to respond • The Insight Community is not intended to represent a sample that is generalizable to be representative of the entire population • Additional analyst time required to analyze data collected from the web-based surveys • EPS would lose the ability to compare year-over-year data with previous iterations of the survey; however, we would be able to compare findings with the 2016 pilot results

Additional Considerations:

- A scan of major policing agencies within Canada reveals that the EPS would be among the first agencies to conduct their survey online.
- Though margin of error is an important tool to speak to the generalizability of the data, it assumes that the sample is fully random. While administering a survey on the phone is accepted to be more random than an online administration, neither medium is truly a random sample. Neither medium is able to truly sample randomly from the full population of Edmonton because of logistical restrictions (i.e., citizens on the no call list or without a local phone number, or citizens who don't have internet access) as well as different types of bias, discussed above.

COMMENTS / DISCUSSION:

The points above can be summarized as follows:

- 1) Currently, the Office of Strategy Management Division is required to find approximately \$40 000 in efficiencies annually. By administering the survey online rather than using an external vendor to administer the survey via telephone, the division would save approximately \$30 000 every two years, or \$15 000 annually, representing 37.5% of the efficiencies the division is required to realize.
- 2) There is no strictly statistical argument for including the City of Edmonton Insight community on the citizen survey. That is, the increased number of participants does not significantly decrease the margin of error, nor does it improve the robustness, representativeness or randomness of the sample.
- 3) The argument to be made in favour of using the Insight Community or a general online link is that it could be perceived by the public as the EPS increasing engagement with community, which is a cornerstone of EPS' community policing model. The potential risk of employing a new method could be an unrepresentative sample; however this can be mitigated by applying sampling quotas to ensure that as representative a sample as possible is captured.

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