

# 11. POST-EVENT SURVEYS

Post-event surveys are self-completion questionnaires that are used immediately after an event, workshop or programme. They help you understand what your audience thought of the experience, what they feel they have gained from it and what they think could be improved. Their advantage is that they can be used to gather data relatively easily from large numbers of individuals, but they are not well-suited to gaining insight into the how's and why's, nor to gathering robust evidence of change (e.g. of demonstrable increased understanding). They may, with caution, be used to ask participants about their own perceptions of what may have changed for them (e.g. 'What did you learn today?').

We've included basic instructions below and there's also more information in the tool selection and data analysis sections of the toolkit, as well as a case study example which uses real data from the Europlanet community to demonstrate how to successfully apply this technique.

## WHAT DO I NEED?

Surveys can be delivered on paper or online, if you have devices available. If you decide to use paper versions, you'll need to prepare plenty of copies in advance and have pencils or pens available at your event, as well as flat surfaces to write on. It's fine if clipboards aren't available as long as there are tables or other surfaces around.

When planning the event, make sure to have time set aside at the end when people can fill



in the survey. In addition, while surveys can be straightforward to administer, response rate can be a problem. If at all possible, it is a good idea either to facilitate the surveys directly (ask the questions and fill in participants' responses) or to have a few people (colleagues if possible) hand out the surveys and be available to clarify questions and collect completed surveys.

## LET'S GET STARTED

Prior to the event, you need to create the survey. See our [Selecting the right tool](#) advice to help you do this effectively. Your survey items (questions) should relate directly to your aims for the activity you are evaluating and should, ideally, provide you with information you might find useful for improving your practice or feeding back to a funder. Because it is important to keep surveys as short as possible, it is best to leave off questions related to, for instance, background knowledge of the topic.

We've outlined the main types of questions you might want to consider using below; as you'll see in our case study example, most surveys combine multiple different question types in order to capture a broad range of information

Question type	Example
<b>Question Types to Use</b>	
Yes/No questions	<i>Have you been to the space expo before? Yes/No</i>
Rating scales	<i>On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is not interested at all and 5 is very interested, how interested are you in going to another talk about supernovas? 1 2 3 4 5</i>
Open-ended questions	<i>What would be one thing you would change about the show?</i>
Demographic questions	<i>Which age bracket do you fall into? 18-24 25-39 40-54 55+</i>
<b>Question Types to Avoid</b>	
Loaded or leading questions	<i>Are the public well informed about scientific developments or are scientists deliberately keeping them in the dark?</i>
Double-barrelled questions	<i>Do you like watching TV documentaries and attending lectures about planetary science? (Someone might like watching TV documentaries but have no interest in attending lectures.)</i>
Iceberg questions	<i>Is it safe for research to be funded by industry? (Which research? Which industrial companies? What do we mean by 'safe'? For whom?)</i>
Hypothetical questions	<i>Will you buy a telescope to go stargazing after visiting our event?</i>

## OK, WHAT DO I DO WITH MY DATA NOW?

You'll need to start by entering your data into a programme for analysis. Excel (or free versions such as Google Sheets) are generally fine, or you can also use a dedicated statistics package such as SPSS if you are familiar with it. Allow one row per respondent, with each question (or each response for multiple-response questions) having its own column.

You may find it easier to work with the data if you 'score' it. For example, 1 = yes, 0 = no; or 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree. Then, you can compare the percentage responding in particular ways to each question (e.g. the percentage strongly agreeing, agreeing, disagreeing etc with particular statements; or responding yes/no to questions). For more information on how to do this, see the section of the toolkit on analysing quantitative data and the event survey case study.

Given the recommended length of the survey (short!) and likely small sample sizes, it is unlikely that the data will meet the criteria for statistical testing. However, with well-constructed questions, responses can still be useful. At the same time, it is important not to overclaim from your data.

## GOT IT! HOW CAN I TAKE THIS FURTHER?

Although paper surveys are most common, post-event surveys can also be created online, for completion either via a website, in person using tablets, or for mobile phones. When selecting an online survey programme, do keep in mind whether you'll have access to the internet during the actual data collection, or whether you need an offline option that you can then upload once you get within wifi range. Zapier (<https://zapier.com/blog/best-free-survey-tool-form-app/>) provides a useful review of free online tools to create forms, and apps to capture survey data.