

# Guidelines for Submitting Online Surveys to Adler Research Ethics Board

To help make your REB application process as efficient as possible, the Adler Research Ethics Board has created this guiding document for online survey methodology.

Also see 2019\_01 example application written by Caruana and Ryan. This application has been thoroughly reviewed by the REB and meets all standards for online surveys ethics application. It has good examples of wording you can copy and paste and then customize to your particular study.

## Methodology:

Online survey methodology uses an online platform to gather data from participants. Questions are usually psychological measures, demographic information and sometimes other information such as work history. The online survey platform allows users to access the survey from any location.

Surveys are often used to compare groups of people, and to identify disparities and patterns in submitted answers. If your research question is more complicated than described, please talk to your supervisor and clearly explain your methodology and approach in your survey.

Things to keep in mind overall:

- See our **FAQ's on online survey privacy** to identify required language for consent forms to explain how online survey companies collect and store data.
- See our **FAQ's on demographic info** if including any questions on age, gender, education, ethnic background. Certain statements must be included in the purpose of the study and the consent form if using the data to compare groups.
- See our **FAQ's on raffles or draws** to identify where in the survey to include the option for participants to enter a draw.
- See our **FAQ on confidentiality vs anonymity** to understand the specifics of an anonymous online survey vs confidentiality of data
- Use the **Informed Consent Form Template**

## Recruitment

See our FAQ's on recruitment and materials for best practices for social media, email and general recruitment, including dissemination of posters.

Many researchers at Adler focus their surveys on employees/members and ask organizations/groups to distribute the survey in return for a summary of results. If supplying organizations/groups with summaries or results, the researcher must state in their application and consent form if they will be sharing organization/group specific and/or the summary of results.

If recruiting through a company, the researchers must explain in their application how **a)** employees/members will NOT be able to be identified by organization/group and **b)** how employees/members will not be coerced by employers to participate in the research.

*Note: It is much more difficult to protect against re-identification in smaller organization/groups that (e.g., have less than 15 employees/members). It is best practice to consider including the size of the organization/group in the inclusion criteria to help keep participation confidential.*

### **Recruitment Appendices**

The application must include a letter of inquiry to the organization/group if requesting assistance with recruitment. This can be the same email that will be forwarded to employees or a separate email only addressed to HR or someone in an authoritative position at the company. If the latter, then the appendices must include two information letters: one asking the organization to help with recruitment, and a second that will be sent to employees.

The appendices must always clearly identify what will be forwarded or shared with the employees/members as part of recruitment. All emails or document must include statements protecting against coercion and possible identification of participants by the organization/group.

### **The Consent Form**

See the FAQ's on the consent form and example applications for best practice. Also see 2019\_01 example application written by Caruana and Ryan.

Below is a check list that will help you avoid common mistakes:

- ☐ All text in the consent form is at a grade 8 readability level unless post-secondary education in English is part of inclusion criteria. See **FAQ on readability level**
- ☐ The consent form identifies the purpose of the demographics/ background information
- ☐ The consent form states if an employing organization/group will see any results
- ☐ The consent form references the privacy policy of the online survey company being used
- ☐ The consent form identifies that participation will not be anonymous if someone submits their email as part of the draw or to receive a summary of results
- ☐ The consent form identifies if the participant must answer all the demographic questions and/or all the questions to be included in the analysis

### **The Survey Package (inserted as the last appendices)**

The application must include the exact text of all parts of the survey as experienced by participants; starting from the landing/info page and ending with the thank page. This should be the last appendix and labeled: Survey Package.

Use *italics* to identify text that provides explanations or information to the REB, but will not appear in the survey to participants. For example, this may include navigation instructions or measurement information. Since these surveys are online remember not to ask for signatures

and to use “[Click]” to show how the participant will navigate to a new page of the survey package.

The Survey Package sub sections MUST be in the following order. Use page breaks to keep organized. Note, you might not use all sections.

- ☐ An **Information** or **Landing Page** (welcomes and reminds participant of study purpose)
- ☐ **Submission for a draw entry** (if applicable)
- ☐ **Screening questions** (if applicable), must include all inclusion and exclusion criteria
- ☐ Reference to where **consent form** will be inserted/ ie: “*Informed Consent form goes here*”
- ☐ **Complete survey**
  - Includes all questions and potential answers
  - Includes and identifies all skip patterns (e.g., “If no, skip to question 3”)
  - Identifies sources of all measures included in the survey
- ☐ **Debriefing statement** (if applicable)
- ☐ **Closing** thank you
- ☐ **Request for results** (if applicable)