Handout for the webinar on

Developing & Validating Survey Instruments
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Validity is the extent to which a data collection instrument measures what it is intended to measure. An instrument's validity, and that of the resulting data, may be enhanced by crafting sound questions and ensuring that they are appropriate for the targeted respondents. To learn more about the various forms of validity, refer to the Research Methods Knowledge Base at socialresearchmethods.net/kb/relandval.

Survey Design Your survey questions should relate directly to your evaluation questions, and your evaluation questions should be explicitly tied to your project's objectives and activities. Use your survey as an opportunity to gather data on as many of your evaluation questions as possible.

For a comprehensive guide to survey design, see the book *Internet, Mail, and Mixed-Mode Surveys: The Tailored Design Method* by Dillman, Smyth, and Christian.

To learn more about survey implementation and analyzing data, check out EvaluATE's January '10 webinar on surveys at evalu-ate.org/events/webinar_evaluation_data and our March '11 webinar on data analysis at evalu-ate.org/events/webinar_making_sense. If you have questions for Candiya Mann, you may contact her at candiya@wsu.edu.

Question Development A fundamental rule to writing a good survey question is to *keep it simple*.

- Use familiar words, uncomplicated sentence structures, and as few words as possible. Check the reading level and make sure it's appropriate for your audience—you can do this in Microsoft Word by selecting *Review > Spelling & Grammar > Options >* and check the boxes for *Check Grammar with Spelling* and *Show Readability Statistics*.
- Ask about one concept at a time and avoid double negatives.
- Make sure response options make sense with the item stem. For example, if you are asking people to rate their satisfaction, the response options should include the word "satisfied," not words like "excellent" or "sometimes."
- Ensure that response categories are exhaustive and mutually exclusive.
- When using rating scales, limit the number of categories to four or five, include an equal number of positive and negative categories, and keep the order of the categories (e.g., positive to negative) the same from question to question. Give each point on the scale a label rather than just a number—it will help respondents understand what each category means and also makes it easier to report the results.

Instrument Validation Steps

1. Clearly identify your object of measurement. Abstract concepts like "sustainability" or "engagement" need to be operationalized in concrete terms.
2. Define the relevant elements of this object. To determine its "domain of content," review the literature; consult stakeholders; and if possible, gather preliminary qualitative data through focus groups, interviews, or surveys.
3. Develop measures (e.g., survey questions) for each element. See the tips on question development above.
4. Review and pilot test the survey. Depending on available budget and time, you might talk through the survey questions with potential respondents, ask colleagues to review them, and/or select a few potential respondents and ask them to complete the survey and provide feedback on the content.

To learn about Peer-Generated Likert Scaling, a method for using potential respondents' own statements as the basis for survey questions, check out the report by Wayne Welch at evalu-ate.org/resources/sustainability_of_ate.

A recording of this webinar and PDF version of the presentation slides are available from evalu-ate.org/events/may_2011_webinar.

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