

## **Mentoring and Peer Review Committee Draft Materials**

The Mentoring and Peer Review Committee is composed of the following people:

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Please send any comments or suggestions to the above group.

Our overall mission is to come up with a handbook for directors and establish a peer-review process. The latter will eventually include an evaluation tool.

We currently have 3 working documents. All of them are included here for the purposes of generating feedback for the set. The documents are:

1. A draft proposal for a peer review process within our membership (pages 2-3)
2. For the handbook: an outline of services that survey centers may provide, followed by the same outline and bullets of resources needed in order to offer such services flagging potential problems and possible solutions (pgs 4-10) The detail is incomplete – we are looking both for any missing categories and more content for what is there. Once we have more detail, we will organize the bullets into more orderly categories for ease of reference.
3. A set of principles for how we will construct an evaluation tool (pgs 11-12 )

We need a set of dimensions around which to organize the evaluation tool and are planning to work from the structure of the handbook list of services. However, our work on this document is still too preliminary for comment so is not included here.

## Document 1 (pgs 2-3): Draft Proposal for a Peer Review Process

Given that we are small group of organizations (40-50 centers), we need a high level of participation to ensure that everyone who would like a peer review has access to these peer services. At the same time, all centers are busy and operate on tight budgets. Thus, we propose having AASRO commit their members to service on “virtual peer review” panels. Each review would benefit 3 directors -- the one being reviewed, and the two reviewers (who would pick up some useful ideas for their own shops). The system would create a pool of experienced reviewers for possible future site visits, as well as baseline data, all of which would come in very handy whenever a full, formal review was required by any particular center's university.

A tentative plan for how this might work follows:

### Availability of Directors for Peer Review Panels

1. Every AASRO member organization would commit their director to participate on a “virtual peer review” panel. Once a director has served, that director would be exempt from serving again for a minimum two-year period. The [secretary?] will maintain a list of AASRO Directors and the dates on which they have served on such a panel.
2. To avoid over-burdening specific directors, those serving elected or chair positions will be exempt from this “on call” commitment during their tenure in other association positions.
3. Two directors will serve on each “virtual review” panel for centers that request a review.
4. Centers wanting a peer review should send out a notice six months in advance of the period in which they want a review. Any interested Directors can volunteer. Volunteers should notify the [secretary?] of their willingness to serve and the notice should go out that the positions are filled once two Directors have signed up.
5. If no volunteers are forthcoming, the [secretary?] will select the first two Directors on the list who are not currently serving in elected or committee chair positions and notify them that their services have been requested for a peer review panel. If the Directors have conflicts during the time period, the [secretary?] will move down the list until two Directors are found who can serve.
6. Directors are also available at their own discretion for site-visit reviews; requests for availability may be distributed over AASRO’s listserv. Any directors who have served in a formal site review will also be exempt from being called for a “virtual review” for 2 years following their service.

**Nature of Peer Reviewer's Job**

1. Using dimensions provided by a tool that is still under development, centers wishing a virtual peer review would first use the tool in a self-study. They would rate their own center and elaborate the points with descriptive text explaining their own scoring.
2. These materials would be forwarded to the two directors serving on the virtual panel for this review. At their option, the directors might have a conference call with the director of the center being reviewed to clarify and ask questions about the self-review materials. The directors would have some set time period to review these materials – perhaps 2 weeks.
3. The two directors would then have a conference call and discuss their independent reactions to the materials and develop a division of labor concerning writing up a response and recommendations across the various dimensions.
4. Written response from the two reviewers would then be due to the organization being reviewed within some additional time period – perhaps 3 weeks.
5. When the site being reviewed receives the written response and recommendations, they will call each reviewer and discuss these, ask questions, etc. This could occur independently with each reviewer or during a joint conference call with all three parties on the line.

## **Document 2 (pgs 4-10): Outline of Services Centers Provide and Resources Required to Provide Them (for Handbook)**

### **Resources Necessary for Survey Centers at Academic Institutions – Identifying potential problems and possible solutions**

Academic Survey Centers supply a range of services to their institutions and to the wider communities in which they are embedded. Any one center may offer some services and not others. Below is a list of services that are provided by existing survey centers throughout the country. Centers need not offer ALL these services, and few do, but all provide some array of these. Following this summary is an overview of resources that are needed to support each type of service at a level of sufficient quality and economy. At the end are comments on *general* resource issues that all centers face regardless of the specific services they offer.

#### **A. Research methods teaching services**

1. Formal coursework – undergraduate or graduate
2. Internships, practica and other “learn by doing” teaching programs
3. “Resident experts,” unpaid consulting to non-profit and community groups

#### **B. Research design and consulting services**

1. Questionnaire review & pre-testing
2. Advising, consulting services for research design & implementation (including budgeting for projects)
3. Grant proposal writing – collaborating with researchers to help write sections of proposals and/or originating proposals
4. IRB – advising about IRB requirements, creating IRB submission packages
5. Sampling design (sample specifications for purchased samples or sampling services)

#### **C. Methodological research and knowledge creation**

1. Field testing of approaches
2. Paper presentations and publications

#### **D. Data collection services**

1. Collection of data by phone survey
2. Collection of fixed-response data by in-person survey
3. Collection of data by mail survey
4. Collection of data by web-based survey
5. Collection of focus-group data
6. Collection of observational data
7. Collection of open-ended response data in any mode: phone, in-person, web-based

#### **E. Data processing services**

1. Data entry & data cleaning
2. Data coding
3. Case weights

#### **F. Data analysis services**

1. Analysis of probability, large-N data sets
2. Analysis of pilot study/ non-probability survey results

3. Analysis of qualitative (textual) data

#### **G. Data archiving and dissemination services**

1. Development of public use files
2. Hosting and support of public use files

#### **H. Report writing and research dissemination services**

1. Report writing for clients (including substantive and methods reports)
2. Report writing for public dissemination
3. Abbreviated summaries and blurbs for newsletters, websites, alumni magazines, etc.

### **List of Services with Notes about Resources Required**

#### **A. Research methods teaching services**

1. Formal coursework – undergraduate level
2. Formal coursework – graduate level
3. Internships, practica and other “learn by doing” teaching programs
4. “Resident experts,” unpaid consulting to non-profit and community groups
  - For survey center staff to teach research methods at any level, graduate or undergraduate, formal classroom style or in a more practical format, the center must have staff who themselves are adequately trained and who hold degrees a level above those they are teaching. Adequate training consists of some level of formal research methods training, not simply that somebody has carried out survey work before themselves. There is an extensive empirical and theoretical literature on survey methods and anyone teaching a class in this area should have a grasp of this.
  - If center staff are asked to teach formal courses, their home institution must make adequate provision for covering their course preparation and teaching time. Running a survey center is a full time job. Staff who teach need to have more support staff to take up the slack.
  - If staff are to teach, they also need support to attend professional meetings, subscribe to the Public Opinion Quarterly and stay abreast of developments in their field.
  - Data collection is a competitive business and it does not support teaching. If the center is expected to provide teaching and training services to the institution and/or larger community, those services must be funded outside of the “paying client” paradigm. RFPs, grants, and fee-for-service contract work all operate within markets. Clients are not willing or generally able to pay more to support teaching and training work.
  - If the Survey Center will be expected to field queries from students, faculty or the general public about how to conduct their own surveys, how to interpret results of survey studies, where to find a sample vender, etc. etc., then, again, the institution needs to be prepared to support some amount of time for such work. Centers will need to have policies about when inquiries amount to consulting work and when inquiries can be reasonably handled within the bounds of supported time allocated to this task.
  - Pilot studies and pre-test work are ideal vehicles for student teaching and training. Support for the development and implementation of practica, internships and other formal training make a good fit with offering pre-testing and piloting services.

**B. Research design and consulting services**

1. Questionnaire review & pre-testing
2. Advising, consulting services for research design & implementation
3. Sampling design
  - As with teaching services, questionnaire review, consulting and research design services require staff with appropriate training and experience. Persons with practical experience about the logistics of running survey projects can consult with those implementing their own survey projects, but overall design consultants should have both practical and formal training in research methodology. Support for operations staff to attend the Field Directors Conference sponsored by AAPOR (the American Association for Public Opinion Research) will result in staff with a better toolbox of options to consider and recommend.
  - It is helpful, but not essential, for shops that will carry out pretests to have a one-way mirror observational space for cognitive interviewing or other pre-test observation.
  - As noted in Section A, pre-testing and piloting services fit well with practical training programs such as internships and practicum-style course work.
  - Sampling for large or complex studies is also complex and may require a sampling statistician. Although most studies may use a purchased sample, shops must still supply sampling specifications to the sample vendor. Practical sampling is a blend of understanding the math about how samples are supposed to work and having practical experience to guide the mix of RDD, listed, screened or other types of sample to purchase, sizes of replicates, etc. Staff from a statistics department may provide some sampling expertise, but unless they have experience conducting surveys, their knowledge must be combined with that of people who have field experience.

**C. Methodological research and knowledge creation**

1. Field testing of approaches
2. Paper presentations and publications
  - Just as student teaching and training cannot be financed by fee-for-service work, so methodological experiments and field tests can only be built into funded work in a limited way without explicit support for these endeavors. Institutions that want their survey centers to be sources of knowledge creation need to provide sufficient support for original grant preparation and submission just as they would for any other grant-seeking researcher at the University.
  - Paper presentations require support for membership in professional organizations such as AAPOR and its regional chapters, and support for travel to the conferences these groups sponsor.

**D. Data collection services**

1. Collection of data by phone Survey
2. Collection of fixed-response data by in-person survey
3. Collection of data by mail survey
4. Collection of data by web-based survey
5. Collection of focus-group data
6. Collection of observational data
7. Collection of open-ended response data in any mode: phone, in-person, web-based

- Phone data collection requires a phone calling shop with CATI software that facilitates call, interviewer, and data management. CATI shops represent a significant expense to set up and maintain. It is penny-wise and pound-foolish to stint on the initial training of staff who will manage a call-shop operation. Many CATI software products have formal training programs associated with them. It pays to have a call-shop manager who knows the software thoroughly and so can make use of the management tools it supplies. It is ideal to have an on-site dedicated programmer to support the software needs of the CATI facility.
- In-person interviewing requires hiring and supervising staff with cars who are savvy about the local area in terms of safety, routes, street names, etc. The University will have to be able to reimburse persons for mileage in a timely fashion. Are there any insurance issues involved?
- Data security will be an issue anytime you collect data. Collection of any data by any means results in needs for two types of security – the need for back-ups so you don't lose data and the need for firewall and anti-viral software to keep unauthorized intruders from getting to your data.
- Cash incentives (or any incentive) may be a problem. Can you write checks? If the University has to produce these it could take months and they can't produce a high volume of small checks. Also, there may be conflicting requirements from IRB regulations and tax law.

#### **E. Data processing services**

1. Data entry
2. Data coding
3. Case weights
  - CATI software or web survey software can also be used to program data entry templates. Since you can use the built-in range-check and skip functions, this cuts down on data entry error. It can also allow you to monitor the productivity of the data entry staff.
  - Coding open-ended response is a job in and of itself. Be careful to budget separately for this. Be clear with clients on the front end about whether data entry work includes close-coding of open-ended fields and about the level at which any coding will be done.
  - There is software to assist with data coding work.

#### **F. Data analysis services**

1. Analysis of probability, large-N data sets
2. Analysis of pilot study/ non-probability survey results
3. Analysis of qualitative (textual) data
  - Data analysis requires having statistical analysis software (e.g. SPSS, SAS, STATA) and staff who are proficient at using these.
  - Beware that software packages make it easy for anyone to run many types of complex modeling programs, but the software won't tell you what sorts of models it makes theoretical sense to estimate, won't specify your model for you, and won't tell you if you are violating assumptions built into the math behind the programs. In other words, the software doesn't substitute for the expertise and shops that want to provide data analysis services need staff who have the relevant expertise.

- If you are providing “supervised RA” sorts of services – that is, the client or principal investigator is supplying the expertise and asking for the data runs that your staff carry out, make sure you and the client have a clear division of labor and a clear understanding of who is assumed to know what. Beware of clients who only want to pay for “supervised RA time” but really expect to hire somebody who can tell them what the research question is, what data runs need to be made and how to interpret the substance of the results.
- Software that assists with the analysis of textual data makes it easier to share coding, summarizing and related work among a team of workers. However, the data are still words and there is no substitute for reading and understanding. Qualitative analysis is labor intensive and time consuming. The software does a good job of forcing you to be more even-handed with the entire body of text and facilitates team work, but it doesn’t read or think for you and doesn’t really save you much time compared to old-fashioned methods of using highlighters, index cards and the like. Again, in other words, the software doesn’t substitute for the expertise. With qualitative work, the person reading and interpreting the words has to know a lot about the substance of the research question.

### **G. Data archiving and dissemination services**

1. Development of public use files
2. Hosting and support of public use files
  - Hosting and support of public use files would require an archiving system, with a minimum of having an archivist.
  - You will need a protocol for what data are stored, what IRB will permit, what standards the data have to be compliant with, and what meta-data have to be supplied about how the data were collected.
  - When you supply data to people, data users come back to you to ask questions about how to use the data you supplied. You will need accessible online documents, codebooks, etc. and staff to handle these sorts of queries. Even if you don’t officially offer support, people will call your center asking for support and your staff will have to spend a certain amount of time fielding those calls.

### **H. Report writing and research dissemination services**

1. Report writing for clients
2. Report writing for public dissemination
3. Abbreviated summaries and blurbs for newsletters, websites, alumni magazines, etc.
  - Websites are a key mechanism through which survey centers may disseminate information. But development and maintenance of websites can be quite expensive. Who pays for this? What expertise is there for this at the University? How must your site link into the University’s general site?
  - Beware of being on the hook for sending out printed reports to anybody who requests this. Generally, project funds don’t cover distribution of the information when the project is over – who takes care of this? How is it paid for?
  - Public use data sets including online interactive data sets are another way that centers may disseminate the data they collect. Who pays for the work of getting data into

public use format? Who provides support to public users? These can be extremely expensive.

### **Center-level Resource Concerns**

Some cost and resource issues cut across all types of services because they have to do with the overall center operations. As a survey center you will need to function in many ways like a small business, but the University systems may be set up more like the former Soviet Union. If you are setting up a center, you need to find out up front what services the University normally provides to campus centers and how the costs of those services are recovered. Because survey centers bring in money, Universities have an incentive to shift costs your way. Because you have to compete with market research firms and others, you have an incentive to shift costs to the University. Because Universities are non-profit institutions, there are Federal regulations concerning how cost recovery operations are allowed to charge for their work and what aspects of their operations may be subsidized by the University.

How this plays out for you depends on the overall approach your institution takes to staying within regulations, how flexible particular institutional actors are about treating you as a special case when this is possible legally but becomes a practical headache for them, and how creative you can be about finding existing models on campus that you can work within to achieve different goals. If you look at things like University-run copy or print shops, University-run lab equipment fabrication operations as well as other research centers on your campus, you may be able to find ways that specific issues are handled for somebody else that fits your own needs well. It is helpful to learn about these and bring these to the table as a solution the University is already implementing for somebody else that they could also implement for you. By mixing and matching work-arounds used in various situations, you may find you can reduce some of your own headaches in dealing with bureaucratic red tape.

Whether and how costs at the level of your overall center operations are covered by the University, by the Center or shared is generally something that can be negotiated. As the needs of the center change over time with growth, shift of services, change in directorship, etc., center directors can seek to re-negotiate these arrangements. Having a strong set of arguments about the value of the center to the University, in addition to information about how others on campus deal with similar issues, are important resources to bring to such negotiations.

Below is an outline of center-level cost-resource issues that typically need to be worked out in order to run a survey center.

#### **A. Financial relationship with the wider University**

1. Indirects (What are they; when are they charged; who gets them)
2. Faculty and staff salary allocation (whose bottom line supports how much of faculty and administrative staff salaries)
3. Support services payments (who pays for purchase, maintenance and repair of photocopy machines, computers and printers; maintenance and repair of space; desktop phone service; CATI shop phone service; etc? Are these costs charged on a flat fee basis or on a service call basis? Must you use internal University services or can you hire services on the open market)

4. Software – systems to track costs by project and person in real time (you will need to be able to track costs by project at a fairly micro-level, but odds are your University’s general accounting systems won’t work for this. What resources, if any, does the University have to permit you to keep your own second set of books with the necessary detail to manage your projects in real time? How will your system interface with the University’s system?)

## **B. Regulations and Documentation**

1. Requirements (what records must be kept for the University and in what format – who pays for this?)
2. Respondent incentives (what are the financial and tax reporting requirements for distribution of respondent incentives and can these be reconciled with the IRB regulations about protecting confidentiality? Is there a mechanism for distributing incentives by cash, check, gift card or other means?)
3. IRB (you will need to develop a special relationship with your IRB and develop standard ways of handling IRB requirements for the work that you do; you will need a system of destroying contact information once it is no longer needed for a study)
4. Does your University have regulations concerning ergonomic issues that restrict the kinds of desks and other set-ups you can have in your space? There may be OSHA regulations that apply to equipment as well. Be aware of this before ordering furniture, keyboard trays, headphones.
5. Universities, like any large institution, may have general all-staff requirements for periodic trainings for fire safety, emergency procedures or similar. Which staff have to be trained and how often? Who pays for this time?

## Document 3 (pgs 11 - 12): Principals for Construction of an Evaluation Tool

We envision the role of the mentoring and peer review committee as one that helps to organize and implement AASRO's mission of mutual support by developing a set of quality guidelines suitable for ...

- use by academic survey centers for self-evaluation and improvement
- use by outside reviewers for comprehensive and constructive evaluation of academic survey centers
- further use by our committee to catalogue specific strategies member centers have used successfully to achieve higher levels of quality or efficiency – this compendium of approaches would serve as a resource for current members and for directors of new academic survey centers

We anticipate that a self-evaluation tool with quality guidelines will be most useful if it displays the following characteristics:

1. **Multiple, independently-rated dimensions:** Academic Survey Centers undertake a wide range of tasks related to social and behavioral science research and interact with stakeholders that range from University administrators, faculty and students to paying clients, data users, public administrators, survey participants and the general public. Centers may excel in some aspects of their operations while showing room for improvement in others.
2. **A focus on ends rather than means.** There are multiple solutions to similar problems. The guidelines should emphasize the goals systems need to accomplish rather than which particular systems a center uses to accomplish goals with.
3. **A focus on fundamentals.** The logic of the guidelines should result in higher ratings for centers with better quality outcomes rather than centers with more capacity, range or cutting-edge systems independent of quality outcomes. That is, a center should not get points simply for having a state-of-the-art focus group room or for having CATI, CAPI, Audio-CASI and web survey technology. Rather, centers should get points for implementing well whatever services they offer. We envision a sort of “Maslow’s hierarchy of needs meets Guttman” logic – you have to attain certain minimums at the basic level of any dimension before the bells and whistles at the top count in your favor.
4. **A modular structure related to capacity.** Because the range of services offered through academic survey centers varies widely from institution to institution, it will be important to have items organized in such a way that those not applicable to a particular center can easily be dropped out of the review without sacrificing the overall utility of the instrument. In other words, the overall outline of dimensions for review should be comprehensive, but each element should be evaluated in a manner that does not presume the existence of other elements.
5. **Concrete descriptions** of outcomes a rater (either the center itself or an outside reviewer) would consider for each location on a low to high scale for elements of each dimension. The chart below excerpted from the “McKinsey Capacity Assessment Grid” shows the format we think would be useful.

<b>Vision &amp; Mission</b>	<b>Clear need for improved capacity</b>	<b>Basic level of capacity in place</b>	<b>Moderate level of capacity in place</b>	<b>High level of capacity in place</b>
Mission	No written mission or limited expression of the organization’s reason for existence; lacks clarity or specificity; either held by very few in organization or rarely referred to	Some expression of organization’s reason for existence that reflects its values and purpose, but may lack clarity; held by only a few; lacks broad agreement or rarely referred to	Clear expression of organization’s reason for existence which reflects its values and purpose; held by many within organization and often referred to	Clear expression of organization’s reason for existence which describes an enduring reality that reflects its values and purpose; broadly held within organization and frequently referred to
Overarching goals	Vision (if it exists) not explicitly translated into small set of concrete goals, though there may be general (but inconsistent and imprecise) knowledge within organization of overarching goals and what it aims to achieve	Vision translated into a concrete set of goals; goals lack at least two of following four attributes: clarity, boldness, associated metrics, or time frame for measuring attainment; goals known by only a few, or only occasionally used to direct actions or set priorities	Vision translated into small set of concrete goals, but goals lack at most two of following four attributes: clarity, boldness, associated metrics, or time frame for measuring attainment; goals are known by many within organization and often used by them to direct actions and set priorities	Vision translated into clear, bold set of (up to three) goals that organization aims to achieve, specified by concrete to measure success for each criterion, and by well-defined time frames for attaining goals; goals are broadly known within organization and consistently used to direct actions and set priorities