

AASRO Survey Committee Meeting Notes

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Survey Committee Meeting Notes

Purpose: Develop a series of focused surveys of the member organization to collect information on current activities, challenges, solutions and areas for research.

Members present:

1. Jim Bason
2. Ron Langley
3. Lorayn Olson
4. Paul Ruggiere
5. John Stevenson (Chair)

(Absent)

6. Mary Stutzman
7. Sarah Nusser
8. John Tarnai

Met to discuss:

- What data do we want to collect?
- How do we want to collect it?
- Is this one or more than one survey?
- How should this information be disseminated?

Summary of Notes

I. Survey Topics and Instruments

A. Range of Topics.

The group divided our survey needs into 4 main groupings:

1. Organizational Structure & Reporting Structure
2. Fiscal Support & Indirect Issues
3. Client Base & Services Provided
4. Training and IRB Issues

B. Grouping Topics for Administration - In-depth Interviews

We separated out the first two topics...

- Organizational Structure & Reporting Structure
- Fiscal Support & Indirect Issues

These are of particular interest because they help us with our interactions with our administrations. The issues are extremely complex, with terms not always used consistently across organizations. Thus, gathering accurate comparable data from different organizations is difficult.

We determined that these seemed better suited to:

- Collection via interviewer administered in-depth interviews, to ensure that complex information was collected accurately.
- Collection every few years, as information was not likely to change on an annual basis.

C. Design and Analysis Notes for Organizational Structure Questions

Paul Ruggiere shared his work on a prior survey effort to assist with analysis of Organizational Structure issues, and offered a useful typology (Description at bottom):

- Independent Center
- Integrated Center
- Institute Branch
- Ancillary Center

These notes have been shared and will be useful. One of the goals of the survey should be to investigate chief benefits, barriers and concerns for each type of organizational structure. Somewhat complex probing will be necessary to understand specifics.

Stevenson raised question of organizational census or sampling. This may depend on available resources or volunteers.

D. Grouping Topics for Administration - Web Survey

The last two topics...

- Client Base & Services Provided
- Training and IRB

These help us understand the current state of the field. These are more useful to track regularly, and are more easily collected.

These we felt would be better suited to:

- Collection via a web survey instrument.
- Annual data collection.

E. Sharing Data

The group agreed that for the time being, data would be available only to member organizations. After data is collected and collated, a better assessment of sensitivity should be considered by the committee, and then brought before the group for feedback. Given that content of the survey is not final, and that type of summary has not yet been determined, it seems premature to sort this out yet.

F. Remaining Questions for Association Before Proceeding

1. Must this be done all by volunteers, or is the group interested in funding this effort? (It was the consensus of the committee members that the survey be treated as a usual survey with a budget, rather than attempting to conduct it using volunteer assistance. This will require obtaining external funding.
2. Shall we survey only members, or are we interested in non-members too?

G. Needs for Next Steps

1. Volunteers to draft new versions
2. Volunteers or funding to collect data
3. Volunteers to analyze data

H. Next Steps

1. Report back to members at AAPOR, get feedback.
2. Begin revising instruments.

Ron Langley kindly offered to take the first pass at splitting last year's ASRO questionnaire into two documents. Next we need to get volunteers for the next round of revisions.

3. Reconvene committee later this summer to discuss timelines and next steps.

APPENDIX: Paul Ruggiere's Typology of Centers:

Independent Center

Independent centers are entrepreneurial in nature and are usually staffed by a director with several full-time staff. There may be some university financial support of the director and another staff person, but most other positions are funded through soft-money generated by the center. The focus of these organizations is growth through project volume. The director is responsible for seeking, writing and generating grants and projects. Associate directors tend to have greater responsibility for project management although there is much overlap between the director and associate director roles. UNT's Survey Research Center has historically operated as an independent center.

Integrated Center

Like the independent center, an integrated center is entrepreneurial in nature. The primary difference is a greater emphasis on collaboration and partnership across university departments. The center is responsible for its own operation and also facilitates faculty success through grant writing and project execution.

Institute Branch

Research institutes have research agendas in a specialized area such as economic development, culture studies, or health policy. Survey research centers housed within institutes usually developed out of the institute's need for data collection on a particular project. Most institutes have a range of research projects which utilize different methodologies. Survey research usually accounts for a small portion of the methods utilized in institute research, and hence, comprise a small portion of total revenues of the institute. The survey research centers operating as institute branches tend to bring in lower levels of revenue as they are not the primary focus of the institute.

Ancillary Center

Ancillary operations are usually run by a faculty person who may or may not have a reduced teaching assignment to run the center. The center may employ one other staff person, but typically, it is a one-person operation. The university supports the center by funding space, computers, software and technical support. These centers typically have two to five small projects a year and are structured more for training students than for research growth.