

Using Surveys in Performance Audits (8 hours)

Course Overview

Surveys are often used to gather generalizable information from a large number of respondents and can be a valuable methodology to use in a performance audit. While surveys can often be the best way to collect the kind of data auditors need for certain audit objectives, surveys can be challenging to implement. Auditors may find that surveys are time consuming to develop and yet not produce the intended results if they are not designed well. Through lecture, class discussion, video, and small group exercises, this course will help participants better understand how to design a survey effort (including sampling techniques), write sound survey questions, pretest surveys, collect the data and analyze results. This information should help auditors make sound decisions about when to use surveys and how to effectively develop and administer them and interpret results.

CPEs: 8

Who Should Attend

This course is designed to help federal, state, or local auditors understand how to implement surveys from design to report writing. Both new and seasoned auditors, as well as team leaders, can benefit from the detailed discussion of how to implement a survey that will lead to objective, defensible results.

Course Objectives

Participants will be able to

- Identify when a survey is a good methodology for audit objectives and how to design the overall survey effort
- Understand how to write survey questions that are easy to understand or interpret, and that minimize burden and bias for the respondent
- Understand how to pretest a survey to find potential flaws and fix them before implementation
- Understand factors in collecting good survey data including respondent follow-up techniques, and how to analyze and report on survey data

Course Topics

Survey Design

- When to use surveys
- Five stages of survey development

- Going from audit objectives to survey questions
- Sampling considerations

Developing Survey Questions

- Writing easily understood survey questions to avoid burden and bias
- Open-ended survey questions
- Closed-ended survey questions
 - Yes/No
 - Multiple choice
 - Rating
 - Ranking
- Order/sequence of questions

Pretesting Surveys

- Cognitive interviews
- Before the pretest
 - Participant selection
 - Mode selection
 - Pretest planning
- During the pretest – retrospective and concurrent approaches
- After the pretest – documenting findings, finalizing survey

Collecting Survey Data

- Non-response follow-up
- Assessing non-response bias
- Verifying survey data

Analyzing and Reporting on Results

- Data analysis plan
- Reporting based on type of sampling