Proposal for City of Ann Arbor

Budget Priorities Survey 2020

September 23, 2020

Project Approach and Survey Methods

Project Background

Each year, the City of Ann Arbor creates a budget to estimate revenues and expenditures. In 2018, the City desired to obtain feedback from residents as a part of the upcoming budget process. National Research Center, Inc. (NRC) was contracted to design, program, administer and analyze the survey results. In 2020, the City desires to repeat the survey to see how residents' opinions are similar or different compared to two years ago.

Design Data Collection Instruments

The 2018 questionnaire was developed through an iterative process with staff of the City of Ann Arbor and NRC. The list of budget categories and community quality items were provided by the City of Ann Arbor. Survey participants were asked about the overall quality of life in the community as well as how they would rate various broad aspects of life in Ann Arbor. They also were asked how important they believed it was that local government help the community prosper in these areas. The survey also provided survey participants an opportunity to provide their perspectives on the City of Ann Arbor local government performance. The largest portion of the survey was devoted to soliciting survey participants' feedback on spending in 56 specific budget categories. For each category, respondents were asked whether they would increase, decrease or keep spending about the same. For items residents felt should be increased, a follow question was asked to assess whether the increase should be funded by paying more or by decreasing funding for other services.

We assume the 2020 survey will be essentially identical to the 2020 survey, with changes to the budgeted amounts for the broader budget classifications, and perhaps some additions and subtractions to the 56 specific budget categories if there have been changes to budget line items since 2018.

If more changes are needed, we have provided a cost estimate for making and reporting on the changed survey.

Conduct the Survey

The 2018 Ann Arbor Community Budget Priorities Survey was offered online. The City of Ann Arbor publicized the survey using a variety of means. The survey was open for data collection from October 5 through November 19, 2018. We assume that the same methodology will be used in 2020.

Analyze and Report the Survey Results

Often the first step in preparing the data for analysis is to "weight" the data to reflect the demographic profile of the surveyed population. Weighting is an important method to adjust for potential non-response bias. In 2018, we also used two questions from the budget survey that were identical to questions from the National Community Survey™ conducted by NRC to weight the data. We will consider doing the same for 2020.

The data will be analyzed using SPSS. We will prepare a report of the results in Microsoft® Word (as well as convert documents into a PDF format). The report will be very similar to that produced in 2018, but include comparisons to the 2018 results. The body of the report of results will tell the story of the survey results in a stylish, colorful, informative way. We will also include an executive summary that gives a quick overview of results while highlighting key findings. Crosstabulations of survey results will be provided in a supplemental Excel file as in 2018. Drafts of the report will be provided to the City of Ann Arbor for review and the final report will incorporate any comments we receive.

Project Schedule

The table below shows a potential schedule for the 2020 survey, assuming any changes to the survey can be quickly finalized. This will allow the 2020 survey to follow a similar timeline as in 2018.

Task	Date
Develop survey instrument and mailing materials	finalized by October 9
Program survey	by October 13
Data collection	through November 24
Data analysis and reporting	through December 17
Draft report for review	December 18
Report finalized	December 30

Cost Estimate

If the survey instrument is essentially unchanged from 2018, the total cost for this project as described above is $10,000. If there are changes beyond the budget amounts and minor adjustments to the budget categories, an additional $3,000 would be needed to make these changes and performing the data analysis.