

Field Enumerator Quick Guide for Conducting Surveys

Workload:

- The NASS RFO and NASDA coordinator will determine the number of potential contacts that will be sent out for field or telephone enumeration for each survey.
- The NASDA supervisors will then decide which enumerators to assign the work based on the amount of work spread across their territory.
- Amount of work will vary considerably from survey to survey. There will be times when you will need to work several hours a day all week long, and there will be times when there is no work at all.
- Specified timeframes will be sent to you for each survey with start and end dates. Deadlines must be met. Your supervisor or the RFO may supply you with a calendar.
- You must stay in contact with your supervisor throughout the work period to keep them informed of your progress.
- You must let your supervisor know as early in the work period as possible if you will not be able to meet the deadline for any reason. This way the supervisor can redistribute the work to other enumerators and still get the work done on time.

Training:

- A state or regional training workshop may be conducted for some of the major surveys such as: June Area, ARMS Phase II, ARMS Phase III, Objective Yield, etc. Most of this training will be administered by Regional Field Office staff and field supervisors. Travel to and overnight stays at a hotel may be required.
- For other surveys, the Regional Field Office may simply send out written instructions of how to complete the surveys and what their expectations are.
- Training presentations and other materials are posted on the NASDA website (www.nasda.org) for many of the surveys NASS conducts. Ask your supervisor or Regional Field Office for help finding these if need be.
- Answers to many of your questions about surveys can be found in your Interviewer's Manual.
- Do not be afraid to call your supervisor or Regional Field Office if you have questions about any aspect of the job. That is what they are there for, and they are a wealth of knowledge.

Make a Work Plan:

- After receiving your assignments for each survey, you will need to make a plan to get your work done as efficiently as possible.
- If conducting personal interviews, you should look at your assignment to see where the operators are located and plot out the most efficient driving route to visit these people.

It may take several visits to catch up with the respondents so plan to stop by at different times on different days. You may be working on different surveys at the same time, so be sure to include all surveys when planning your route. The “Map All” feature on your iPad is very useful in planning a route.

- While conducting personal interviews, be sure to always have your NASDA ID Card and Motor Vehicle ID Card, NAS-007 to identify yourself to respondents who may question your identity or authority to conduct interviews.
- If you will be telephoning, you should set aside different times throughout the day to attempt to contact the operators. Early morning, lunch time, and in the evening after supper are usually the best times to catch respondents at home. Do not get discouraged if you continue to get an answering machine or no answer. Sometimes it is just a matter of catching them at the right time. Be sure to document the days and times you called and the disposition of the calls. For example: 12/09/2016, 10:30 AM, Answering Machine. This helps to know when someone actually answered the phone and when no one was home. After calling on several different respondents over the course of the work period, it is nice to have records of what you have done because you will not be able to remember each time you tried to contact each of the respondents.

Steps to take to find a respondent:

- The number of times you should try to visit on operation in person will vary depending on how far away it is from your home, how many operations you have to visit in the area, what the results from earlier visits were, etc.
- After multiple visits with no luck, try to call the respondent or check with your supervisor for advice.
- If the target operator listed on the address label does not live at the provided address or has moved, and the current resident cannot provide an address, you should do some detective work to try to locate them. You can try the following:
 - Call any provided phone numbers
 - Check with the Farm Service Agency (local FSA office)
 - Ask at the local Farmers’ Coop
 - Check free internet sites such as:
 - Anywho.com
 - 411.com
 - YP.com
 - Google
 - County Assessor’s website
 - EWG.org (Environmental Working Group) Which lists recipients of government ag program funds
 - County Public Records: may require a visit to the county offices depending on local policy

Number of times to try to call an operator on the phone:

- The number of times you should attempt to call an operator will vary depending on previous attempts.
 - If you only ever get the answering machine, leave a message only one time, but continue calling at different times of the day and evening throughout the work period.
 - If no one ever answers and there is no answering machine continue calling at different times of the day and evening throughout the work period.
 - If someone answers the phone, but cannot answer questions about the farming operation, ask if there is a better time to call back to catch the operator or someone who can answer questions.

Coding surveys as refusal or inaccessible:

- If you make contact with the operator and he/she declines to complete the survey for any reason, code as a refusal.
- If the respondent asks to make an appointment and then is never available to complete the survey, code as a refusal.
- If the respondent says he/she does not have time to do the survey now and then keeps putting you off on follow-up contacts until the work period is over, code as a refusal.
- If you visit an operation and no one is ever there, code as inaccessible.
- If you call an operation and no one answers or you only get the answering machine, code as inaccessible.
- If you make contact with someone other than the operator that cannot answer the questions and the operator is never available, code as inaccessible.
- Always document each attempt you make to contact a respondent with the date, time, and result of the attempt.
- Always write accurate, concise notes of anything that may be needed for future contacts. This can be anything from additional phone numbers, where to find the respondent at different times of the day, a partner to talk to, mean dogs, locked gates, etc.

Interviewing Guidance:

1. Be positive and smile

2. When someone answers, keep smiling and introduce yourself. State you are acting on behalf of the USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service and tell them the name of the survey you are working on (as appeared on the questionnaire or letter mailed them). Ask if the person answering (or anyone else currently available) could answer a few questions related to the survey.

3. Be sure you know who you are talking to and that they know what operation you are asking questions about. Verify names and addresses for every questionnaire you do.
4. Ask for permission by saying “May I ask you a few questions about your farming operation?” If you ask if they would like to do the survey, they will likely say no but they are willing to answer your questions.
5. Ask the questions exactly as printed and in the same order as listed in the questionnaire or CATI or CAPI instrument. Leaving out parts, adding, or changing the wording may result in a different answer.
6. Listen to what the respondent has to say, pause to let them speak, and pay attention.
7. Probing is sometimes necessary when the respondent gives an unsatisfactory answer. A good probe would be, “what would be your best estimate to the nearest bushel?” A poor probe would be “about 35 bushels?” or “would 30 or 40 be better?” The respondent would probably answer “38 bushels” to the good probe, “yes” to the first bad probe and “40 bushels” to the second bad probe. Don’t be overly helpful by putting words in the respondent’s mouth, you reduce the accuracy of our data by doing so.
8. Don’t rush the interview. Be honest with the time you expect it to take. If the respondent does not have time to complete the survey properly, try to set an appointment for when they will have time, or see if someone else can give the information.
9. Be familiar with your questionnaire. Know the meaning of all terms in the questions. Know the purpose of the survey and when and how the results of the survey will be published. If no one has told you, ask your supervisory enumerator.
10. Speak in a normal conversational voice. Talking loudly does not normally improve the ability of the person to hear and may actually distort your voice. If they keep indicating they are having a problem hearing or understanding, slow down your speech and be sure you speak clearly, which is more likely to help than talking louder. Talking loudly or yelling, especially into the phone, is also very disruptive to others around you.
11. Most of us talk faster in a normal face-to-face conversation than can readily be understood over the phone. Research has shown that a pace of about 120 words per minute (two words per second) is ideal for telephone interviewing.
12. Use the respondent’s name during the interview.
13. Do not use slang.
14. Always make good notes. Fully explain any unusual situations.

Responses to Reluctant Respondents:

I don't have time for an interview.

"I appreciate how busy you are and how valuable your time is. This won't take very long and I can help you get through it as quickly as possible."

Why are you calling me again? I gave you my report last month.

"And we thank you for your continued participation. In order to keep our inventory and production estimates current and up-to-date we need to conduct surveys throughout the year. With regular surveys, our reports accurately reflect the most current industry conditions."

Do I have to participate?

"While this is voluntary, the unbiased crop and livestock reporting programs depend entirely on reporting from operators like you. Your participation helps keep these estimates as accurate as possible."

Can't you find someone else for this survey?

"That's a good question. Our surveys use a sample of farmers from operations of all sizes. Since you were selected to represent other operations in your area, we can't substitute someone else."

My farm is too small to make a difference

"I can understand how it might seem that way. Your farm was selected to represent other small operations—which often have very different characteristics than large farms. All farms count, and that's why it's so important that we interview both small and large operations."

Why should I report; what's in it for me?

"I'm glad you asked that question. Your report, along with the reports from other farmers selected for the survey, is the basis for unbiased crop and livestock estimates. Accurate information helps reduce market uncertainty and allows you to make better, more informed decisions"

Prices went down the last time I did a survey.

"You're right to be concerned about your prices. And while prices can fluctuate, historically they tend to go up about as often as they go down. Accurate, unbiased information from our crop and livestock estimates actually helps stabilize markets and minimize price volatility"

I don't give information over the phone.

"I understand your concern. I'd be happy to give you the phone number for our Regional Field Office so that you can call to verify who I am. Or, if you prefer, I can arrange to have someone come out to the farm to see you in person."

I don't want any other government agencies having access to my report.

“You're right to be concerned about your privacy. That's why facts about your farm are strictly confidential and used only in combination with similar reports from other operators like yourself. All information is combined for statistical purposes only, and no one outside of NASS has access to individual reports. By law we are prohibited from sharing information with other agencies.”

For additional information visit the NASDA website at <http://www.nasda.org/>