

Planning and Implementing Your Campus Climate Survey within the OVW Campus Program Funding Cycle

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Planning Your Climate Survey

Campus climate surveys can be used to track sexual misconduct prevalence rates or to evaluate the success of campus-wide victim services and prevention programs. Climate surveys can also be used to identify programming and service needs on campus. For this reason, many institutions want to use a climate survey as a needs assessment in Year 1 of their Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) Campus Program projects. However, to allow for thoughtful planning and to ensure the success of the survey, implementation in Year 2 is likely to be more productive. With a Year 2 spring survey administration in mind, this factsheet provides step-by-step guidance (with links to additional resources) and a recommended timeline for planning and implementing a climate survey within the OVW Campus Program structure.

Why is spring of Year 2 the best time to administer a climate survey?

A successful climate survey effort requires careful planning. Your schedule will need to allow time for numerous steps to be completed well in advance of the survey administration, including determining the goals of your climate survey, developing a climate survey instrument (or selecting an existing one), designing a recruitment approach that will maximize student participation, securing required human subjects research approvals, programming the survey for web-based administration, and developing all other survey materials (e.g., marketing materials, recruitment e-mails). Given the funding cycle and academic calendar, the spring of Year 2 is the most realistic time by which grantees can complete these activities.

Administering a climate survey in the spring—specifically the period right after students return from spring break—is desirable for many other reasons. With this timing, prevalence estimates obtained for the “current academic year” will cover nearly the full academic year; for first year students, these estimates will also *exclude* experiences that happened in high school (which is an issue for a fall administration if a survey asks about experiences in the past 12 months). This schedule also allows the survey to be kept open for 4 full weeks before the start of final exams. This 4-week window maximizes student participation by allowing for follow-up reminders to be sent weekly and avoiding final exam preparations.

Overview of Target Timeline



The following tables provide suggested action items for completing the target activities within each year (e.g., planning, implementation, and dissemination). We have also provided a suggested order and timeline for completing these activities and mapped them to key OVW Campus Program milestones to demonstrate how each step fits into the larger project.

Year 1: Establish Survey Goals

Funding Year 1	Campus Climate Survey Milestones	OVW Campus Program Milestones
October–December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you have conducted a climate survey on your campus previously, think about what went well and what could be improved. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Were the measures from a validated instrument? Was the sample representative of the campus population you serve? Have the data helped you to accurately identify prevalence rates or service needs on your campus? Would more recent data be useful? Do you have different questions that might require a new survey effort? 	Receive notice of award. Attend new grantee orientation (December).
January–March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you believe a climate survey will be needed on your campus, engage your Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) and administration in conversations about why and how it might work. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You will need to think about timing, how the climate survey fits with other data collection efforts, who will lead the survey effort, and what administrative or research approvals will be needed before it can happen. If you do not think a climate survey is needed, consider other data sources to inform your services and programming 	Begin convening with your sexual Assault response team. Develop a strategic plan and project timeline. Attend OVW Training and Technical Assistance Institute (TTI) in February.
April–June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through strategic planning, identify the purpose and goals for your climate survey. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do you hope to learn? What prevalence estimates do you need? What dimensions of climate do you want to assess? Do you hope to compare your school’s data to other schools? Begin planning the survey administration process, including strategies for maximizing student participation and determining what human subjects approval process will be required (e.g., institutional review board). 	Finalize your strategic plan and timeline. Attend OVW TTI in June.
July–September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Select an existing, validated campus climate survey, or measures from several surveys, that will achieve your climate survey goals (AAU, ARC3, and CCSVS). Begin working with campus and community partners to secure incentives to maximize student participation.¹ 	Collect formative data to inform program, process, and climate survey needs. Begin to implement planned programs and services.

¹ Please note that OVW funds cannot be used to support student incentives for participating in climate surveys. We would be happy to talk with you about alternative sources of funding you might be able to find on campus.

Year 2: Plan and Implement the Survey

Funding Year 2	Campus Climate Survey Milestones	OVW Campus Program Milestones
October–December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete necessary adaptations to your survey instrument. • Develop other materials, such as consent screens, recruitment messages, marketing materials, and student resources. • Submit survey and recruitment materials to your institutional review board for research approval. • Program final instrument into your selected web-based platform (e.g., Qualtrics, Survey Monkey).² 	<p>Attend required TTI, webinar, and cohort events.</p> <p>Continue regular meetings with campus and/or coalition SART.</p> <p>Continue to implement planned activities (e.g., policy review and revision processes, prevention programs, service coordination).</p>
January–March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thoroughly test the programmed instrument. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ensure that skip patterns work properly and that data save as expected. • Market the survey and your planned launch date. • Begin survey recruitment and data collection (after spring break). 	<p>Make necessary program and/or service adjustments based on formative data collection.</p>
April–June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue data collection for at least 4 weeks after launching the survey. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Send weekly reminders to non-respondents. • Send final reminder 2 days before closing the survey, with “last chance” notification of closing date. • Distribute participant incentives. 	
July–September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct (or work with identified data analyst to conduct) data cleaning and analysis. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Assess representativeness of data (response rates, comparison of respondent demographics to full population). – Calculate prevalence estimates for student populations. – Calculate other estimates (e.g., incident characteristics, attitudes toward and experience with existing services). • Work with administration and SART to translate findings into program and policy recommendations. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Conduct follow-up focus groups with students to clarify subgroup-specific findings or to get specific student recommendations on how to address issues raised in the survey. • Formulate a communications plan for how to disseminate findings and to whom (e.g., students, faculty, administration, larger community). 	

² On the grantee-only section of [the OVW Campus Program website](#) (requires grantee login), you can find a factsheet titled “Comparing Commonly Used Survey Platforms for Collecting Your Campus Climate Survey Data.” This resource will help you determine the best platform for your survey.

Year 3: Disseminate Survey Results & Define Goals for Follow-Up Survey

Funding Year 3	Campus Climate Survey Milestones	OVW Campus Program Milestones
October–December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disseminate climate survey findings (preferably in conjunction with planned response/initiatives). Implement program and policy changes developed from climate survey results. 	Attend required TTI, webinar, and cohort events. Continue regular meetings with campus and/or coalition SART.
January–March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Debrief campus climate survey process with SART, administration, and students. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What worked well? What would you do differently? Will you do another climate survey to evaluate program and policy changes or to track changes in prevalence? 	Continue to implement planned activities.
April–June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If implementing a follow-up survey (recommended every 2–3 years), set new goals and begin planning (recruitment strategy, timeline, incentives, additional measures). 	Make necessary program and/or service adjustments based on campus climate survey results.
July–September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make necessary adjustments to your existing climate survey. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add new questions to address emerging issues and to assess new policies or programs. Add specific questions to follow up on issues raised on the prior survey. Plan and secure incentives for new round of data collection. 	

Conclusions

Planning and implementing a campus climate survey involves many more steps and processes than just developing the survey instrument and collecting data. To ensure that your data are unbiased and representative of your student population, it is critical to allow enough planning time at the beginning of your grant. The resources provided in this document can be found at <http://changingourcampus.org/> (and even more resources are available in the grantees-only section). Remember that we are partners in this process! Do not hesitate to reach out to RTI Campus Climate technical assistance providers to talk through your planning process, ask for feedback on measures, discuss marketing and incentive strategies, or plan for what to do with the data after collection.

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