



## Demographic Data Collection Sheet Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. Why do we collect this data?

We collect this data because we are required to report on it annually to the federal government, who is one of our primary funders. In addition, we need this data to see who is attending our programs and to adjust our methods until the demographics of those who attend our programs match the demographics of all of the people living in the area.

### 2. Can I collect the required demographic information on or with an evaluation survey?

Ideally, collect this information from participants on a separate piece of paper. However, when it makes sense, the required demographic information can be asked as part of program evaluations, as long as it is not paired with identifying information such as name or address. For example, it would be appropriate to collect demographic information when paired with questions measuring program impacts, as that would allow the comparison of impacts across different groups. It would **not** be appropriate to collect demographic information on forms that also collect participant's name or contact information such as mailing address or phone number.

### 3. Who should use this form?

This form is to be used with all adult audiences. All MSU Extension faculty and staff members providing a program offered to the public must attempt to collect information related to race, ethnicity and gender using this form. Use approved youth forms for youth audiences.

### 4. When should I collect this data?

Experience tells us that it is best to collect data midway through a class, training or meeting. This gives you an opportunity to form a relationship with participants. By leaving the task to the end of the session, you run the risk of participants not taking the time to fill out the information.

### 5. Is this the only form we should be using?

Yes, it is important that we have a level of uniformity with the forms used to collect this data. If you used other forms in the past, please begin using this updated form immediately. For youth audiences, use approved youth forms.

### 6. Can I use this form to include additional information like name, address, email or other contact information?

No, this form should not include other information that could be used to specifically identify a program participant. If you wish to collect additional information, you must use a separate collection process—even if it's simply a blank piece of paper on which to write contact information.

### 7. Should each program participant get their own individual demographic data collection form to fill out?

Yes, this information is confidential and each participant must be given their own form to fill out. This includes members of the same family.

**8. Are there any changes/modifications that I can make to this form if I am interested in obtaining other information from my program participants?**

No. You should keep this form in its original state. If you choose to obtain additional information from your participants, you can use additional forms. For example, you may want to:

- a. Collect information required by or for reporting to grant or other funding sources.
- b. Collect information to assist in improving the program or outcome measurement if you are asking for any other identifying information (such as name or address).

You should not add questions for any of the following reasons:

- a. You are curious to know something about your participants.
- b. Questions that would make the process of collection information too long and possibly impact the return rate of this form.

**9. Is it mandatory that program participants fill out this form?**

No, this form is not mandatory for program participants to fill out, it is strictly voluntary. However, it is mandatory that you offer all participants an opportunity to provide this information.

**10. Isn't this information collected through Events Management when a participant registers for a program?**

Yes. If you use events management for registration, this information is collected. However, events that don't require registration or that accept walk-in participants require that you offer to collect this information on site.

In addition, please ask all participants if they filled the information out when they registered. Some people are not comfortable filling out information before they've made a connection with an actual person. Though they opted out initially, now that they have met an MSU Extension faculty or staff member in person, they may feel more comfortable filling out the paper form. To prevent duplicates, be cautious that participants do not fill out the form twice.

**11. If I am working with a group for a series of workshops or over multiple weeks/months, should I use this form to collect demographic data for each session?**

No. You do not have to use this form to collect the demographic data of the group if there are no participant changes in a specific series/program over time. It is good practice, however, to ask the group before each session if there is anyone who has not filled out the form to ensure that you have not missed anyone. If new people join the series, it is imperative that you offer them the form.

**12. Is the observation method an acceptable way to collect this data?**

No. It is not acceptable to collect this information by observation with adult audiences. The data must be collected from the participants themselves.

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