

# SO YOU WANT TO ADMINISTER A SURVEY...

A GUIDE BY THE YOUTH ACTION HUB

## 1. Common Sense Logistics for Canvassers (You!):

Be realistic about where you will be and what you will be doing:

- **Check the weather before you leave the house.** If it's going to rain, bring an umbrella.
- **Always make sure you have water with you.**
- You will be walking, **wear comfortable walking shoes.**
- If you encounter an emergency situation and/or crisis **call 9-1-1, then call your YETI lead.**

Pay attention to how you may be perceived, even before you begin canvassing:

- **Presentation is everything.** People will make assumptions based how you look and act. Dress casual but presentable. Overdressing can intimidate youth, and give off the appearance that you are selling something.
- **Mood management!** Humans are mirrors. If you are in a tough head space, the people you speak with will pick up on that and reciprocate it. If you start to have emotional troubles, take a few minutes and clear your head.
- After conducting a few surveys, **take some time to regroup and center yourself.**

## 2. Your Team:

- **If you are carpooling, establish a driver, and know your driver.** Your driver is your captain. No car has two drivers and no ship has two captains. It is in everyone's best interest to have a system of central coordination.
- **If you are carpooling with anyone, make sure everybody exchanges phone numbers,** so nobody gets lost or left behind.

## 3. The Environment:

Public spaces are a conglomeration of neutral space and private spaces (also referred to as personal spaces).

- **When canvassing and administering surveys, take some time to acquaint yourself with the environment before you talk to anyone.** This makes you feel a bit safer where you are, and in turn, makes the people you talk to feel safer speaking with you.
- **Set up your own space.** (e.g. if you are at a coffee house, set your stuff up at a table).
  - **Do:** Invite those you seek to survey to the space you created. Bodies interpret this a show of good faith.
  - **Do Not:** Invade other's spaces. If you set up camp in your respondents' space, you run the risk of making those you wish to talk to defensive and disinclined to work with you.
- **Stay safe!** When you walk into a hotspot, take a mental note of where you are and where the exits are.

## 4. Approaching Youth:

- ***Build rapport with the people you speak to.*** It doesn't matter how much someone agrees with your stance or supports your cause, if they don't trust you, they won't partake in the survey.
- ***Make your point relevant to whom you are speaking with.*** Youth often have not developed abstract and systematic conceptual thinking. Do what you can to show them how they are making a difference and helping end homelessness by taking the survey.
- ***Bring stickers.*** Really. People like stickers, and people (especially the college crowd) will do silly things for stickers. You know you still like stickers.

## 5. Talking to Strangers:

- Talking to people in this context is the same as talking to people you haven't met before in other situations, and similar rules of engagement still apply:
  - ***You still want to be cordial and polite.***
  - ***You still want to be friendly and engaging.***
  - ***You still want to smile.***

## 6. Tactics:

- ***Use strong language.*** Remove the words 'try' and 'uhm' from your vocabulary. Replace words like 'attempting' with words like 'achieving', and minimize sentence passivity. (Instead of, 'we are attempting to end youth homelessness'; try, 'we are ending youth homelessness and we need your help to do so.')
- ***Be presumptive.*** Instead of asking, 'Are you willing to take a survey?' ask, 'You want to make your voice heard right? Great, then take this survey real quick.'
- ***Speak slowly and enunciate.*** Not only is it easier to understand you, but it comes across that you are level-headed and know what you are talking about, thus you are worth listening to.
- ***Maintain control of the conversation.*** When someone says they don't have time, you say, "No worries, I'll give you the quick version." Don't give them a quicker version, but they think they're getting one, thus placating their sensibilities, and establishing that you are running the conversation. This also entails redirecting tangents that conversations often take back to the subject and connecting their interests to the survey. (Nature metaphor time: if the conversation is water, make sure you are the one who dug the canal)
- ***Acknowledge possible problems and interruptions before they do.*** If you see someone is getting ready to leave a coffee shop, for example, start with, 'Hey, I see you are on your way out, but...' This makes people feel like you are acknowledging what they are going through and are paying attention.
- ***Make a plan and stick to it.*** Know what you are going to say before you say it. It makes you more believable, and reduces "word vomit."
- ***Stay authentic.*** Not only will it make conversing easier, but it will help lower both your guard and the respondents' guard which promotes rapport.
- ***Yes mode:*** While talking to people, nod your head up and down, as if you were nodding your head in agreement. Subtle body language cues are picked up by people you are talking to and they will reflect them.