Methodology and Protocol for
Economic Monitoring of
Arizona Contractors

_____

Introduction – Purpose

The purpose of this project was to design, test and develop contractor reporting forms. Resulting from this, the Four Forest Restoration initiative (4FRI) Multi-Party Monitoring Board will be ready to conduct economic monitoring and to assess the economic impacts of the 4FRI initiative and other forest restoration projects occurring across the State. This project completed the necessary steps to begin to collect economic data from 4FRI contractors in following calendar years.

Designing the Survey

A draft survey instrument was previously designed through funding received from a National Forest Foundation grant. This instrument served as a template to design five separate survey instruments representing all sectors of forest-related industries working on restoration initiatives across Arizona. The five sectors represent logging, trucking/hauling, road maintenance, milling, and biomass utilization.

Each survey instrument contained six sections: 1) general business information; 2) employment information/demographics for full time, part time, and seasonal employees; 3) production/operational costs; 4) type of products produced (if applicable); 5) grants and financial assistance; and 6) gaps and opportunities in infrastructure and small diameter wood products that would improve outcomes for forest products industry.

Contacting Contractors

To refine the draft surveys into a final instrument, we solicited contractor input. The initial goal was to receive feedback from two contractors from each industry sector (logging, trucking/hauling, road maintenance, milling, and biomass utilization) (n=10). A sample of contractors was identified and a contact list was generated.

A generic email was sent to all contractors identified in the sample. The email explained the goals of the project and asked contractors their willingness to review, test and refine the instruments. Within a week of the email, each contractor was contacted by phone to assess

their willingness to participate and a formal meeting was scheduled. At times, several calls/contacts were necessary to seek contractor participation.

Pretesting the Survey Instrument

During the pretesting stage, contractors where asked to assess the completeness of the draft instruments, their thoughts on contractors' willingness to answer questions, whether any clarification was needed on questions, the feasibility for contractors to report the information, the best format (paper and pencil or electronic), and the best time of year that contactors would have the information available to complete the survey.

Pretesting was completed on all draft surveys with two contractors each (n=7) with the exception of one for trucking/hauling, road maintenance, and biomass utilization. Pretesting resulted in valuable feedback and suggestions were used to revise and finalize the draft survey instruments. Additional feedback such as timing and presentation of the final surveys will be summarized and used as a guide for future data collection.

Designing Final Survey Instrument

Contractor feedback revealed the final surveys should be presented into two formats, electronic and as a paper and pencil instrument. Survey Monkey, a web-based survey development cloud-based software, was selected as the electronic platform (https://www.surveymonkey.com/).

An introduction is included at the beginning of the survey to inform respondents about the purpose of the survey, an overview of its contents, guaranteeing respondent's confidentiality and anonymity, and the importance for industry to complete the survey.

Electronic Surveys – Database

The final five surveys were separately programmed into Survey Monkey so information asked is relevant to contractor's businesses. Each section of the survey was programmed onto a single page for ease of completion. All surveys were previewed and tested for accuracy.

Lastly, survey responses were exported into Excel. The Excel database can be used to analyze the data or the data can be exported into another software format for analysis.

Final Products

The final products include: 1) five paper and pencil surveys, 2) five electronic Survey Monkey instruments, 3) five databases, and 4) a fact sheet. The fact sheet template was created to assist with summarizing and sharing the economic significance of forest restoration initiatives across Arizona. This information is important in ensuring government officials, decision makers and members of the community understand how forets restoration initiatives provide economic benefits to local rural communities across Northern Arizona.