

Contact tracing is a key component of limiting the spread of COVID-19 and safely reopening the economy and society. States and localities across the country are in various stages of planning for and implementing contact tracing activities so they can isolate sick individuals and identify new infections. Although contact tracing is part of routine public health surveillance, the urgency and scale of these efforts are placing extraordinary demands on the capacity of health departments and the local governments that house them.

Contact tracing shares important features with the collection of survey data, as well as the taking of the U.S. Census. The Societal Experts Action Network recently released a rapid expert consultation that suggests proven strategies from survey research that decision makers can use to encourage participation and cooperation in contact tracing efforts related to COVID-19. These strategies are summarized here.

Provide advance notice. In survey research, letting people know ahead of time that they may be contacted legitimizes the communications they will receive. Similarly, a rapid series of notifications starting as soon as individuals are tested for COVID-19 could prepare them to receive communications from the local health department and know that those communications are legitimate.

Partner with trusted sponsors. Having a request for participation come from the most trusted sources possible—such as local clinics and health care providers, racial and ethnic media, tribal elders, or clergy—can double the rate of participation in surveys.

Offer relevant incentives. Even small prepaid incentives have been shown to increase survey response rates. For contact tracing, in-kind incentives such as masks, hand sanitizer, groceries, or household supplies might also increase participation.

Enhance interviewers' skills. Skilled interviewers are essential to establishing trust and rapport in ways that increase the openness of survey respondents. Techniques used to enhance the effectiveness of survey interviewers—practice and role playing with experienced interviewers, including practice in responding flexibly to interviewees, and efforts to help interviewers believe in the legitimacy of the survey—could be applied to contact tracing.

Develop messaging that appeals to people's motivations. People are motivated to participate in surveys by what affects them and the people they care about. Describing the benefits of participation in concrete terms is helpful in increasing participation rates.

Accept partial information. People do not always know or feel comfortable sharing information about others in their social networks. People could be encouraged to provide just enough detail about their connections to allow contact tracing efforts to proceed.

To read the full rapid expert consultation, click [here](#). For more information about SEAN, visit nationalacademies.org/SEAN.