

Preliminary Report on Open Data Surveys
for Discussion with
The Technology & Innovation Commission

Prepared 12/7/15
By Commissioners Andrew Schrock & Gwen Shaffer

From September 2015 through December 2015, the city of Long Beach hosted an online survey about open data (<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LBOpenDataSurvey>). During this same period the Mayor's Commission on Technology & Innovation hosted three open data forums. In order to attract a broad range of residents, the events were held at Long Beach City College on a Saturday afternoon; at MADE in downtown Long Beach on a Saturday morning; and at CSULB on a Monday evening. A total of about 73 residents attended the forums. During these events, members of the commission distributed paper versions of the survey. Attendees who expressed a preference to complete the survey online were directed to the website.

The following preliminary results reflect responses submitted by 68 residents who completed the survey—including both the online and paper versions.

Survey participants reflected the wide range of cultural backgrounds and occupations in the city of Long Beach. Nearly 15% of respondents identified as Asian, 21% identified as Latino, and 13% identified as multiracial or other. The respondents held various occupations, including: web developer, student, professor, analyst, and retiree. Participants were nearly universally educated, with 94% having at least some college education. Yet, only 20% were or had ever been professional software engineers.

For discussion: interest in open data appears widespread across multiple demographics that are relatively educated but not necessarily technical experts. Should we recommend a guide or links to other educational materials on the open data portal?

Most respondents said they would like to see a chief data officer (CDO) position in Long Beach. More than half (55%) would prefer a CDO, while only 4% said they would not like Long Beach to have a CDO. The rest said they did not have a strong opinion.

For discussion: CDOs build bridges between departments, promote best practices with data, and ensure the timely release of data. Long Beach, as a mid-sized city, may not require a dedicated CDO. Would the public be accepting of a part-time role or substitute, as long as the mechanisms for fulfilling a CDO role are clearly outlined? Should the commission aggregate job descriptions and salaries for CDOs in similar-sized cities, to get a clearer idea of the cost and range of duties?

The top requested data sets were: crime (75%), transit (65%), code enforcement (56%) and restaurant inspections (56%), city expenditures (52%) and lobbyist activity (50%).

For discussion: how does this information help us prioritize data sets for public release? Given that crime data and restaurant inspection reports are already made available on LongBeach.gov, how can the open data portal raise awareness that this data is out there, and perhaps present it in a more utilitarian format?

During the forums there were questions raised about metadata and data quality.

For discussion: do we want to make any formal recommendations on data formats? Should the city standardize data sets, so that statistics are easily compared and understood?

A relatively small number of survey respondents and forum attendees raised concerns about privacy and security of data. In forums, too, we sometimes got questions that showed residents were wary of the negative connotations of data being released to the public.

For discussion: Open data sets rarely have personally identifiable information. Should the commission develop language explaining that existing laws already exist to safeguard their online privacy? And, if such data sets were to arise, detail procedures for removing personal data?