



Executive Office for Administration & Finance
State House, Room 373
Boston MA, 02133

Saving Time and Money for Elder Affairs

The Executive Office for Administration and Finance ensures the financial stability, efficiency, and effectiveness of state government and assists the Governor in developing and implementing cost-effective public policy initiatives that benefit the residents and businesses of the Commonwealth.

The Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs is a government agency whose mission is to promote the independence and well-being of elders and other people needing medical and social supportive services. The agency serves caregivers and families throughout the state of Massachusetts.

Key Survey Replaces Labor Intensive, Limited Capability Survey Methods with a Highly Efficient, Adaptable, and Flexible Turnkey Solution

Peter Tiernan is Chief Financial Officer for the Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs. He explains that the agency, which supports and advocates for seniors across the state, is especially unique because of how it is organized. Despite being relatively small and centralized, for example, it is responsible for coordinating with thousands of people throughout a large geographic area. Tiernan describes:

"We have a single statewide office with 60 employees. But that office oversees a network of 30 different nonprofit agencies that have a total workplace population of 3,000."

A few years ago, Tiernan was put in charge of research and data for the agency. One of his primary goals was to raise the level of credibility and value of the office's research team so that it would receive the respect and attention it deserved. But at that time the agency still relied upon conventional paper surveys that were processed by hand, and Tiernan recognized an urgent need to invest in more sophisticated professional survey tools. He recalls:

"I knew we needed to significantly improve efficiency and minimize the burden of administrative work."

But Tiernan wasn't impressed with most of the automated survey software products that were available in the marketplace. None of them seemed robust or scalable enough to meet the demands of his agency.

After experimenting with various other survey products and finding that they had serious limitations, Tiernan discovered Key Survey.

"With Key Survey we were finally able to let the data team concentrate on doing statistical analysis, not labor-intensive data entry."

Key Survey Solves Multiple Problems Quickly and Easily

Before deploying Key Survey, the agency's research was all done the old fashioned way. The whole system was based on painstaking and burdensome manual distribution, tracking, analysis, and reporting. As a result, the timeline of each survey was also extremely long and subject to additional postponements, such as postal service delays, that were beyond the control of the agency. That left lots of room for human error while it also increased the potential for data to become stale before it was eventually analyzed and reported.

"The entire process was paper-centric. Surveys were mailed out and then mailed back to us. Everything was tracked by hand. We also conducted telephone surveys, and in that case the survey interviews were recorded and then had to be transcribed to paper before the results could be organized and analyzed."



Needless to say, switching over to Key Survey made an extraordinary positive impact because it saved countless hours while dramatically increasing efficiency. All of the issues that prompted Tiernan and his agency to seek out a new survey system were resolved, and Key Survey simultaneously generated other innovative value-adding solutions and capabilities. Tiernan says:

In the beginning I anticipated that it would do everything we needed it to do, and of course it did."

But Key Survey gave him and his team an unexpected pleasant surprise because the more they used it, the more it enhanced their performance in fresh new ways. The software integrated easily into the agency's own reporting tools, too, making the transition seamless and user-friendly.

We encountered no problems using Key Survey right off the shelf and internally it replaced our Excel spreadsheet aggregation."

Over time we began to realize that Key Survey was capable of doing much more than we had ever hoped for or imagined."

Affordable and Flexible Key Survey Data Integration

The flow of data for Tiernan's agency happens between dozens of separate agencies and thousands of different people, all under one centralized umbrella of responsibility. Feedback, input, and statistical information has to be constantly gathered, analyzed, shared, reported, and then distributed throughout the state of Massachusetts. So the agency conducts frequent surveys that touch upon a multitude of different topics.

About once every six weeks we directly survey approximately 800 people. But those people will subsequently use Key Survey to gather additional information on a local level. If you add it all up each survey involves about 4,000 unique contacts, and we do that about eight or ten times a year."

In the past this kind of robust system had been really difficult to fully integrate because the surveys had to go far beyond the agency's own government firewall. But Key Survey solved that problem, too, making it easy to conduct secure surveys that interact in a dynamic way with a broad non-governmental professional network.

Meanwhile the high volume of surveys the agency conducts must be done in a budget-conscious way, to save Massachusetts taxpayers as much money as possible without compromising quality. That is especially true in today's challenging economy. So Tiernan was pleased to find that Key Survey not only offers a highly sophisticated survey platform but that it is also competitively priced.

The fact is that Key Survey even helps to pay for itself. The agency can design a survey that asks about purchasing patterns or habits, for example, and then analyze the responses to uncover new ways to lower costs through strategies such as bundling purchases for bigger discounts. Tiernan explains:

We also often use Key Survey to do customer satisfaction surveys, and it is very useful for submitting successful grant applications. Key Survey enables us to measure performance outcomes, for example, and to interact with fiscal directors who are in our statewide network."



Key Survey Customer Service is the Best Feature of All

Tiernan recommends Key Survey for many reasons, including its technical advancement, intuitive ease of use, and multidimensional problem solving capability. But, he says:

Customer service is the best feature of all. The support team is always efficient, responsive, and helpful whenever anyone with our agency calls for help. It is obvious that Key Survey has a strong culture of tech support and is very solution oriented."

Continued Reliance on Key Survey for a Variety of Tasks and Projects

Tiernan adds that it would be hard for those on his research team to imagine trying to work the labor intensive way they used to, back before they were introduced to the features and benefits of Key Survey.

The Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs definitely plans to continue using Key Survey. "Nothing else even comes close to it," says Tiernan. "We like everything about it."