

**Solano County Fairgrounds
Public Outreach Survey – August 24 to September 14, 2018
Executive Summary**

Background

On July 27 and 28, 2018, the Solano County Fair Association (SCFA) held a Strategic Planning Workshop in order to prepare a 2018-19 Strategic Plan. Four goals were established during the Workshop, one of which was “Establishing and Defining Our Identity.” One of the two objectives under this goal was to create and circulate a public outreach survey.

To that end a survey was developed, with staff and Board of Directors input, to cover a broad range of topics touching on the primary operations of the SCFA as well as to gather general information about entertainment preferences and basic demographics.

Implementation

The survey was designed using Constant Contact’s email survey tool allowing it to be easily distributed to the SCFA’s email list comprised of over 5,000 subscribers. While Constant Contact does not have the most sophisticated data analysis tool compared to other survey generators, using it to create and distribute the survey was a free feature of the SCFA’s program subscription. It also had the added benefit of collecting respondents’ email contact information (with their permission) which was added to SCFA’s email database growing it to over 5,300 subscribers.

In conjunction with the email distribution, the survey link was posted to the SCFA’s Facebook page which has over 4,200 followers. Additionally, the post was supplemented with a paid “boost” of \$100 total over the three week survey period. The boost expanded the reach of the Facebook post to a total of 11,708 people, 18 years or older within approximately a 30 mile radius of Solano County.

Respondents were encouraged to complete the survey with the opportunity to win two admission tickets to Six Flags Discovery Kingdom. The tickets came at no direct cost to the SCFA as they were part of a cross-promotional agreement made earlier in the year between the two businesses.

Results

A total of 581 people responded to the survey, 338 email subscribers and 243 Facebook users, providing a significant sample size in order to analyze responses and gain insight into public opinions regarding the SCFA’s activities.

In survey methodology, the number of responses received is roughly reflective of a population size of 500,000 people with a 95% confidence level and a 4% margin of error. In other words, the survey results can be taken as having a 95% certainty of accurately reflecting the attitudes of a population slightly larger than Solano County (430,000 residents) with responses deviating within a 4% range.

The survey was broken down into topical sections with both closed and open-ended questions. Several questions allowed for more than one answer per respondent, thus generating percentage totals greater than 100%. Survey responses are summarized as follows.

Section 1 – Solano County Fair

A majority of respondents (58.3%) did not attend the 2018 Solano County Fair. When asked why not, the overwhelming response was due to conflicts arising from work or personal schedules. This was closely followed by saying that the two day format did not give enough days to attend based around other activities, and “lack of entertainment” was a moderately distant third reason.

Of those who did attend the 2018 Fair (40.1%) most attended to spend time with friends and family (63.8%), with free admission, the livestock barns/exhibitions and food (in that order) getting the next highest rankings within a few percentage points of each other (an average of 38.6% each).

The last time most respondents (49.7%) attended the Fair was in 2017 followed by attending 2 to 4 years ago (21.6%).

Responses were somewhat evenly split between whether Fair guests would prefer free Fair admission and purchasing separate tickets for “add on” activities like concerts (40.1%) versus paying for Fair admission that included special activities (35.1%). 14.4% had no preference.

A majority of respondents (54%) would be willing to pay for premium reserved seating at concerts and other Fair special events.

Section 2 – Web Site & Solano Race Place

To determine awareness and use of the SCFA web site, respondents were asked what pages they had viewed on the site. The annual Fair page ranked highest (60.6%) with the Upcoming Events page ranking second (53.5%). The Youth Ag Day page came in a distant third (17.3%) with responses relatively equal across other pages.

Most respondents (68.1%) had never been to the Solano Race Place with the primary reasons being no interest in horse racing or in gambling. Several respondents also said that they were unaware of the Solano Race Place or what it was. Of those who have been to the Solano Race Place, over half had purchased food and/or a beverage with a slightly smaller number indicating they had made a race bet.

In general, survey respondents did not appear to be horse racing or gambling enthusiasts. 79.1% did not watch or make a bet on any of the Triple Crown races and 62.6% would not consider betting on a sporting event of any type.

Section 3 – Facility Rentals

A relatively small section of respondents (17.5%) have considered holding an event at the Fairgrounds. Of those who considered holding an event, 32.4% actually did have their event at the Fairgrounds. Location was the primary factor influencing the decision (75%), followed by cost (43.7%), facilities (37.5%) and Fairgrounds staff (31.2%). The event type was evenly split between public and private.

Of those who considered holding an event at the Fairgrounds but didn't (67.6%), cost was the primary reason for the decision (45.5%). This was followed by location (17.6%) and an equal amount of responses for facilities and contract/insurance requirements (14.7%). A variety of other responses also

included the event was too small for the facilities, desired dates were not available, amenities were outdated, a different venue was chosen and the event itself was cancelled.

The overwhelming answer by respondents who had not considered holding an event at the Fairgrounds (65.9%) as to why not was simply that they had no reason to book an event at any facility. A distant second response was that they were unaware that events could be booked at the Fairgrounds, particularly smaller events and private events.

Section 4 – Other Fairgrounds Operations

- Youth Ag Day:
 38.5% are aware of the event
 42.1% are not
 19.2% had no response
- RV Park:
 45.2% are aware of the RV Park
 35.4% are not
 19.2% had no response
- Digital Billboard:
 57.3% are aware of the Fairgrounds' digital billboard
 23.4% are not
 19.2% had no response
- Attended an event at the Fairgrounds:
 53.7% had attended a public or private event
 27% had not
 19.2% had no response
 When asked what type of event was attended, the overwhelming top response was the annual Solano County Fair. Other events that had multiple responses included RV shows, Youth Ag Day, dog shows, concerts and dances, gun shows, the Lantern Light Festival and private events of various types.

Section 5 – Entertainment Preferences & General Demographics

A final series of questions were asked in order to gather general information about the respondents. The goals of these questions were to learn about some basic entertainment preferences, understand how respondents get their news and event information, and collect baseline demographics to help better analyze survey responses.

Musical entertainment was prominent among activities respondents enjoy, with concerts ranking #1 (80%) and music festivals #3 (59.8%). Family activities and events ranked #2 (65.3%). Comedy performances and animal related events came in next in a tie (53.2%), followed by craft shows (48.2%), sporting events (43.3%), car shows (38%) and participatory sporting events like mud runs or 5K races (21.5%). The dominant response for "other" was "California" indicating an interest in outdoor activities.

Respondents were asked what type of music they listen to in order to inform potential Fairgrounds entertainment programming as well as choices in marketing expenditures via radio. R&B was the top response (54.2%), followed by classic rock (46.1%), country (44.1%), Top 40 (40.7%) and jazz (33.7%). Additional responses were spread across a wide variety of other types of music.

Somewhat surprisingly, print media ranked highest on how respondents get their news and event information, with the combined responses for newspaper, community magazines and event guides equaling (93.7%). Digital sources followed with Facebook coming in second (68.7%), followed by internet search (57.4%) and other combined online sources (53.4%). Television had a strong showing at 53.6%, with radio and word of mouth both receiving 46.6%.

- 58.1% of respondents were female
12.7% were male
28.9% declined to answer
- 16.3% of respondents were age 18 to 34
13.7% were age 35 to 44
16.6 % were age 45 to 54
17.5% were age 55 to 64
8.2% were age 65 or older
- 6.5% or respondents were African American
8% were Asian or Pacific Islander
38.3% were Caucasian
9.8% were Hispanic or Latino
3.4% responded other
33.6% declined to answer
- Based on zip code responses, 84.8% of respondents reside in Solano County. Of those, responses were broken down by city as follows.
 - Vallejo, 38%
 - Fairfield, 12.5%
 - Vacaville, 11.2%
 - Benicia, 7.5%
 - Dixon, 5.2%
 - Suisun City, 4.3%
 - Rio Vista, 1.2%.

Summary

As the first comprehensive public outreach survey done in several years, the results are extremely useful in understanding our current position in the marketplace as well as providing insight into community perceptions about our programs and facilities. Overall, results across the board show great room for growth in both community awareness and utilization of the facilities and activities at the Fairgrounds. How this is achieved is an ongoing process requiring both organic and paid promotion techniques.

In helping reach or Workshop goal of “Establishing and Defining Our Identity”, the survey provided baseline data that can be refined in follow up surveys and/or focus groups to further explore each of the Fairgrounds’ operations areas individually for more detailed understanding. It is anticipated that this will be an ongoing process as part of the 2018-19 Strategic Plan.