

Developing Frequently-Asked-Questions (FAQs) for Survey Respondents and Data Users



QUEST 2013

April 9, 2013 / Washington, DC

Shawna Waugh, Mathematical Statistician, Office of Petroleum and Biofuels Statistics

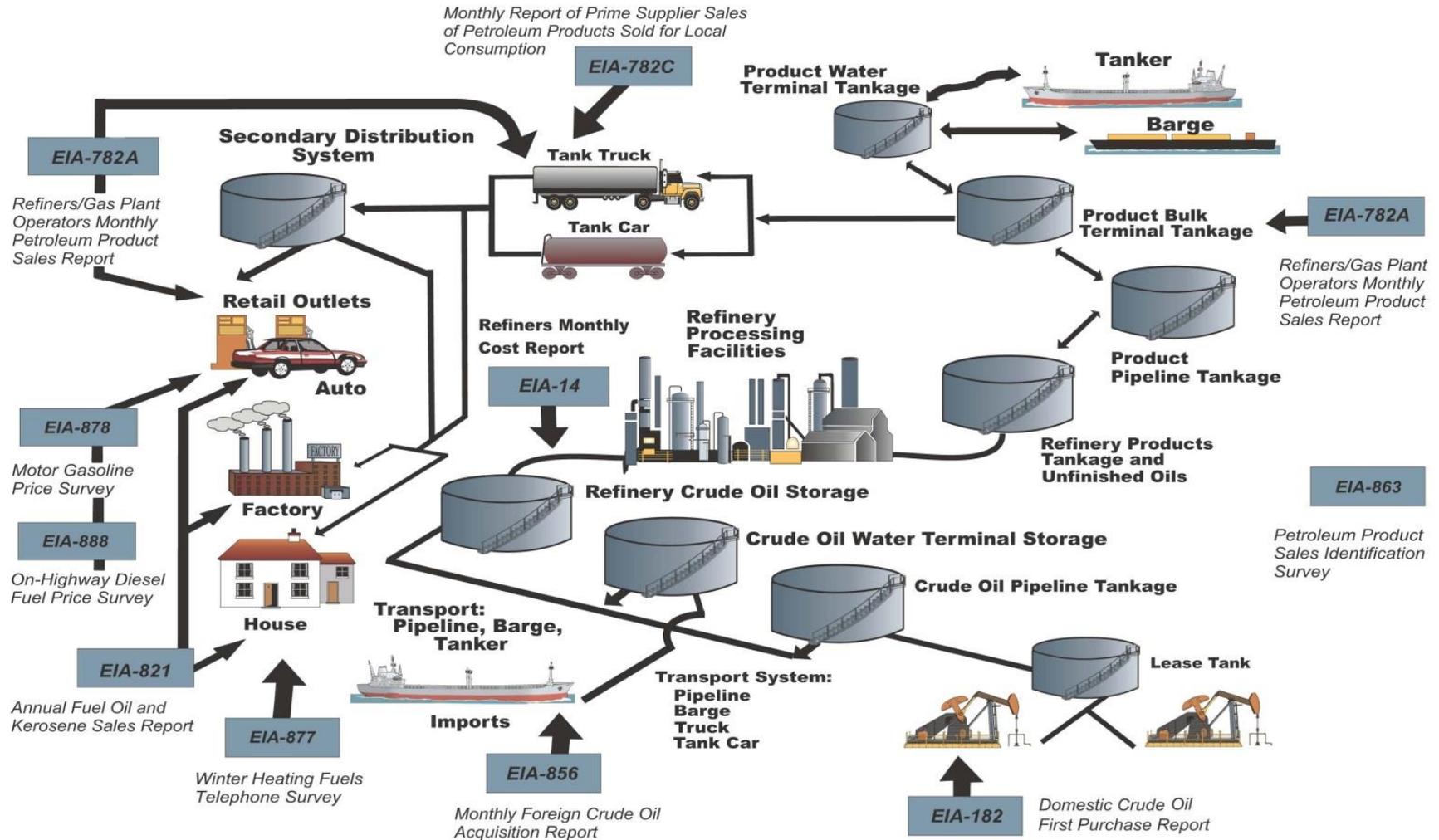
Disclaimer: Opinions expressed are those of the author and do not constitute EIA policy



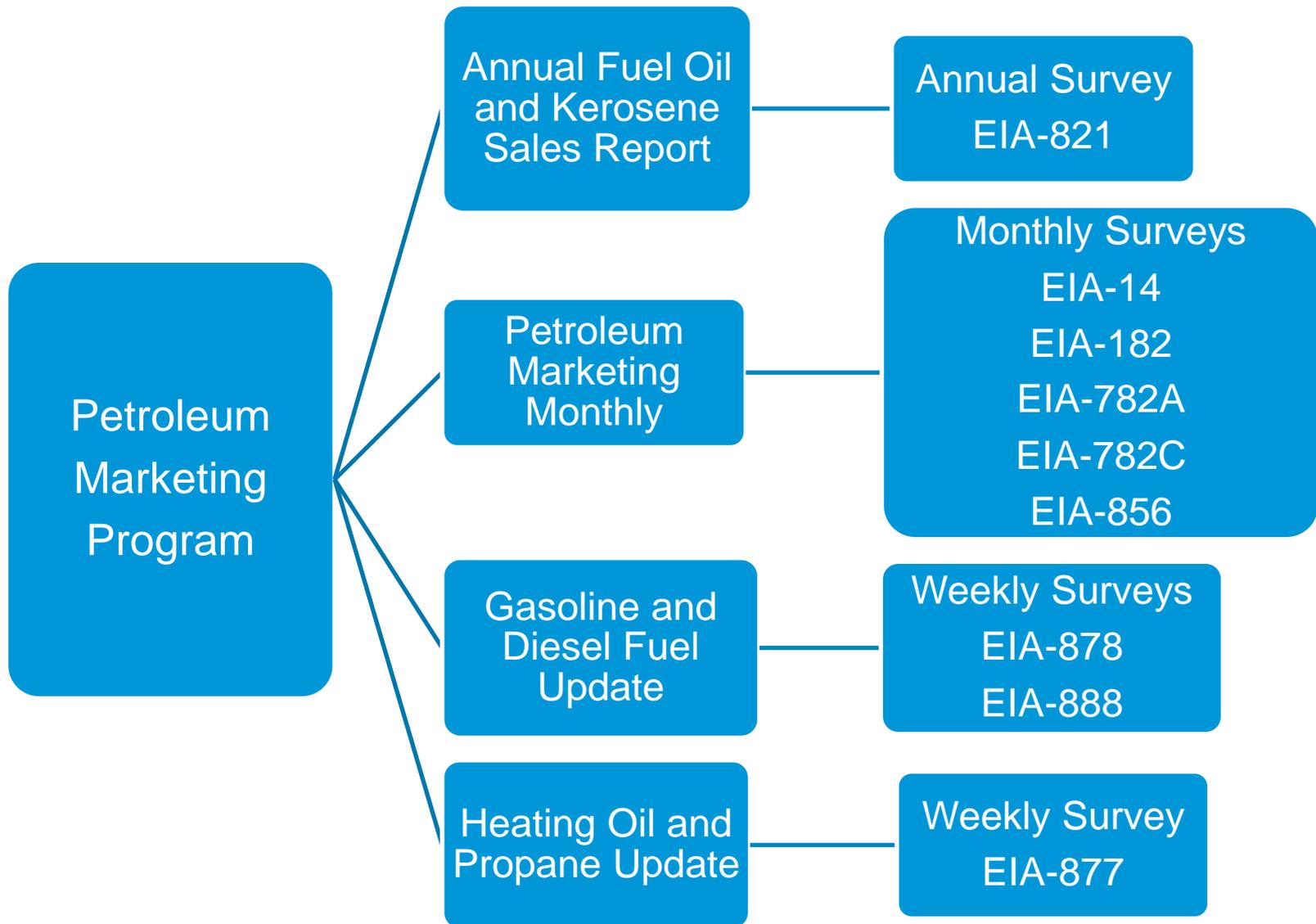
Overview of Frequently-Asked-Questions (FAQs)

1. Background on Petroleum Marketing Program
2. Plain Writing Act of 2010
3. Design of FAQs
 - FAQs for Survey Respondents
 - FAQs for Data Users
4. 12 Steps for Developing FAQs

PETROLEUM MARKETING DATA COLLECTION



Petroleum Marketing Products and Surveys



Plain Writing Act of 2010

Purpose

- Users find what they need
- Users understand what they find
- Users use what they find to meet their needs

Practice

- Logical organization Anticipate & organize questions
- Word choice Use active voice
- Use common, everyday words
- Presentation Use design features – lists and tables

PBS Applications

- FAQs for Survey Respondents
- FAQs for Data Users

Plain Language: A Global Phenomena

Canada

- British Columbia Securities Commission
- Canadian Bankers' Association
- Canadian Securities Administration
- Department of Finance
- Office of the Alberta Auditor General

United Kingdom (Plain English Campaign)

- British government issued a White Paper
- Ireland's National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) hosts www.simplyput.ie

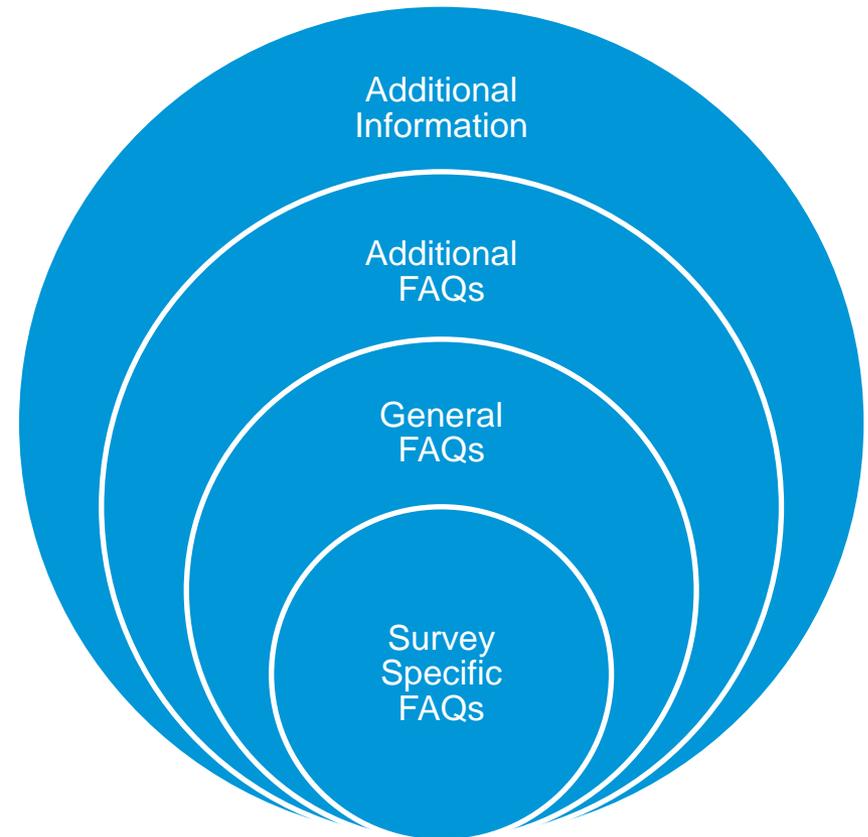
Other Countries

- Australia
- Denmark
- New Zealand
- South Africa
- Sweden

and many more...

Design of FAQs for Survey Respondent

1. General FAQs
 - Recycle questions
2. Survey-specific FAQs
 - Relate to measurement
3. Additional FAQs
 - Link to subject matter FAQs
4. Additional Information
 - EIA Today
 - Energy Explained



Design of FAQs for Data Users

For Gasoline and Diesel Fuel Update

1. Price Trends and Regional Differences
2. Price Components
3. Measuring Prices
4. Alternative Options for Motor Gasoline and Diesel Data
5. Data Quality and Survey Methodology

12 Steps for Developing FAQs

1. Know Your Survey Respondents and Data Users

- Identify questions survey respondents have about the survey
- Identify questions data users have about the publication

2. Organize Your Questions

- Determine the best organization and order of the questions
- Provide navigational links to additional information

3. Summarize Main Points

- Use headers, lists, and other features to summarize
- Provide links to additional information when useful

4. Write Short Sentences and Paragraphs

- Be brief and to the point

12 Steps for Developing FAQs (continued)

5. Use Everyday Phrases and Words

- Be conversational

6. Minimize Jargon

- Don't assume your reader is familiar with abbreviations and acronyms
- Avoid bureaucratic language and terms

7. Use Strong Subjects and Verbs

- Use active verb

8. Define Uncommon Terms

- Define uncommon terms and use them consistently
- Provide a link to a glossary, if available

12 Steps for Developing FAQs (continued)

9. Recycle Questions

10. Modify FAQs

- Incorporate feedback from survey respondents, customers, and staff

11. Notify Respondents and Customers When FAQs are Originally Posted and Updated

12. Use Agency Template to Post FAQs

- This will also help users to find what they want and to understand what they find

For more information

U.S. Energy Information Administration home page | www.eia.gov

Shawna Waugh | shawna.waugh@eia.gov | (202) 586-6484