Understanding the Evolving Role of IR in Higher Education

The National Survey of IR Offices

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December 2, 2021

Housekeeping

We welcome questions! Please use the “Questions” section of the GoToWebinar control panel.

Download a copy of today’s presentation in the “Handouts” section of the GoToWebinar control panel.

This webinar is being recorded and will be available.

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Before we begin, we have a few housekeeping items to discuss. First, your microphone will stay muted throughout the webinar but if you would like to ask me a question, please type your question into the “Questions” section of the GoToWebinar control panel and click “Send”. I will receive those questions and answer as we time.

Second, if you would like a copy of today’s slides , please click on the “Handouts” section of the GoToWebinar control panel and download the file.

And, finally, this webinar is being recorded and will be made available.

Outline

- Overview of the National Survey of IR Offices (NSIRO)
- Examples of data and information available
- Benchmarking for comparison and improvement
- Features of NSIRO 2021
- Reporting and comparison tools
- Invitation to participate in NSIRO

Over the next 45 minutes or so, I will share more details on the National Survey of IR Offices. This research and benchmarking project provides valuable insights and useful tools for better understanding the evolving role of IR within higher education.

I will be covering these six topics
1. An overview and background on the National Survey
2. Examples of information gathered has been used to understand more about the characteristics and work of IR offices
3. Talk a bit about how the information from the survey

can be used in benchmarking and for improvement

4. Describe feature of the 2021 version of the NSIRO survey

5. And, the report options and tools available for those who complete the survey

6. Invite all of you attending this webinar to participate

OVERVIEW OF NSIRO PROJECT

Institutional research professionals have continuously revisited the question "What is IR?" The practice and discipline of IR continues to evolve in response to the changing higher education environment in which it operates.

The Association for Institutional Research (AIR): The First 50 Years (2006)

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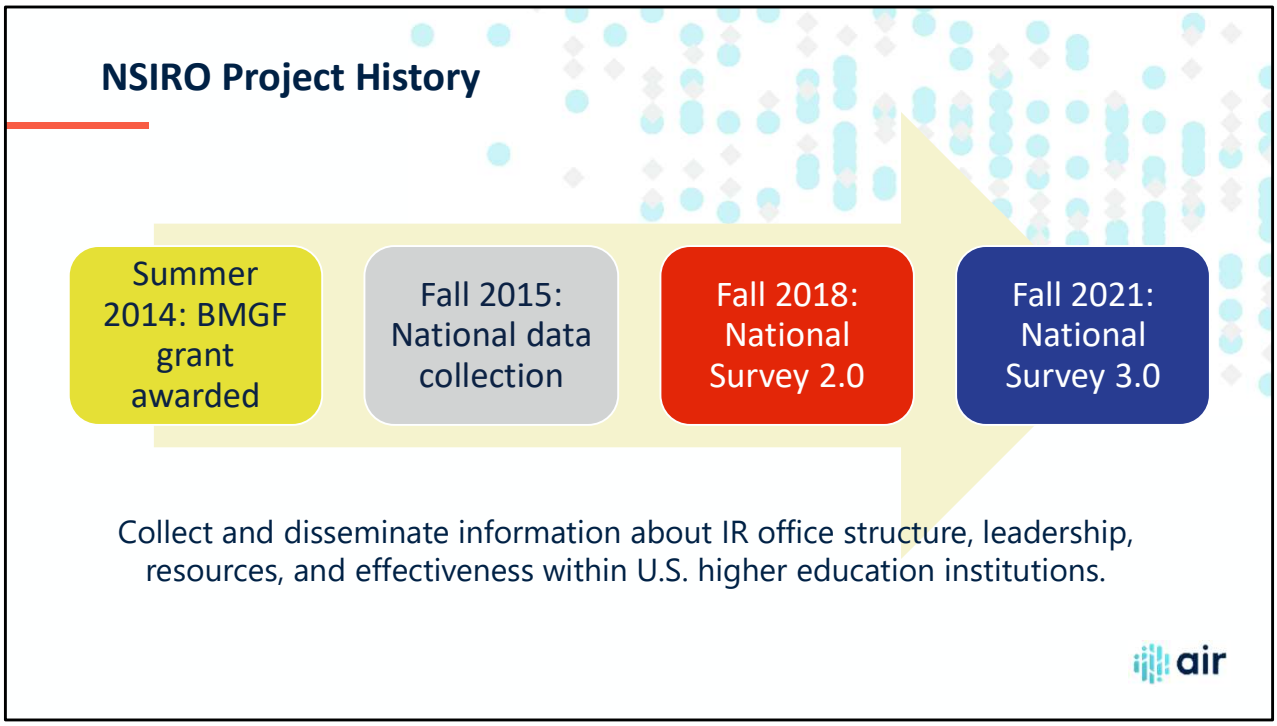
This is an excerpt from a history of the association prepared for AIR's 50th anniversary in 2006 and it highlights the dynamic, continuously evolving nature of our profession. Although it can sometimes be frustrating to not have a pat answer to the question "what is IR?" I would posit that IR's ability to evolve and adapt is a key to our success and resilience as a profession for the last 70+ years.

It is also important to understand HOW our profession and our practices are changing and adapting over time. And the National Survey of IR offices can help us answer

those questions and support our profession's continued evolution and improvement.



The NSIRO project began in the summer of 2014, when AIR was awarded a Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation grant. And national surve of IR offices one of the three activities funded by this grant.

[click] With help from a diverse group of IR professionals in developin survey questions and for pilot testing, the first version of the national survey was launched in the fall of 2015. AIR collected responses from over 1500 institutions.

[click] A second updated and expanded version of the survey was launched in 2018 - collecting nearly 600 responses.

[click] And now data collection is underway for version 3.0.

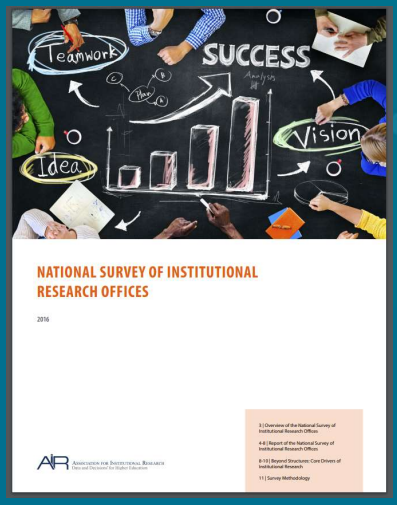
The goal and purpose of the National Survey remains consistent acros

all three versions - to Collect and disseminate information about IR office structure, leadership, resources, and effectiveness within U.S. higher education institutions.

Poll

NSIRO Reports & Briefs

https://www.airweb.org/NationalSurvey



2018 AIR National Survey of IR Offices Briefs

The National Survey of IR Offices gathers data on a wide array of topics. In an effort to ensure that key findings are made available in a manner that is useful, the 2018 results are presented in a series of report briefs. This approach allows for focused attention on specific topics, and collectively, the briefs provide a rich overview of the field of IR.

- Staff Roles
- Staff Salaries
- Staff Job Functions
- Teamwork and Efficiency
- Leader Characteristics
- Executive Leadership for the Data and Analytics Function
- Reporting Relationships
- Work Functions
- Work Portfolios

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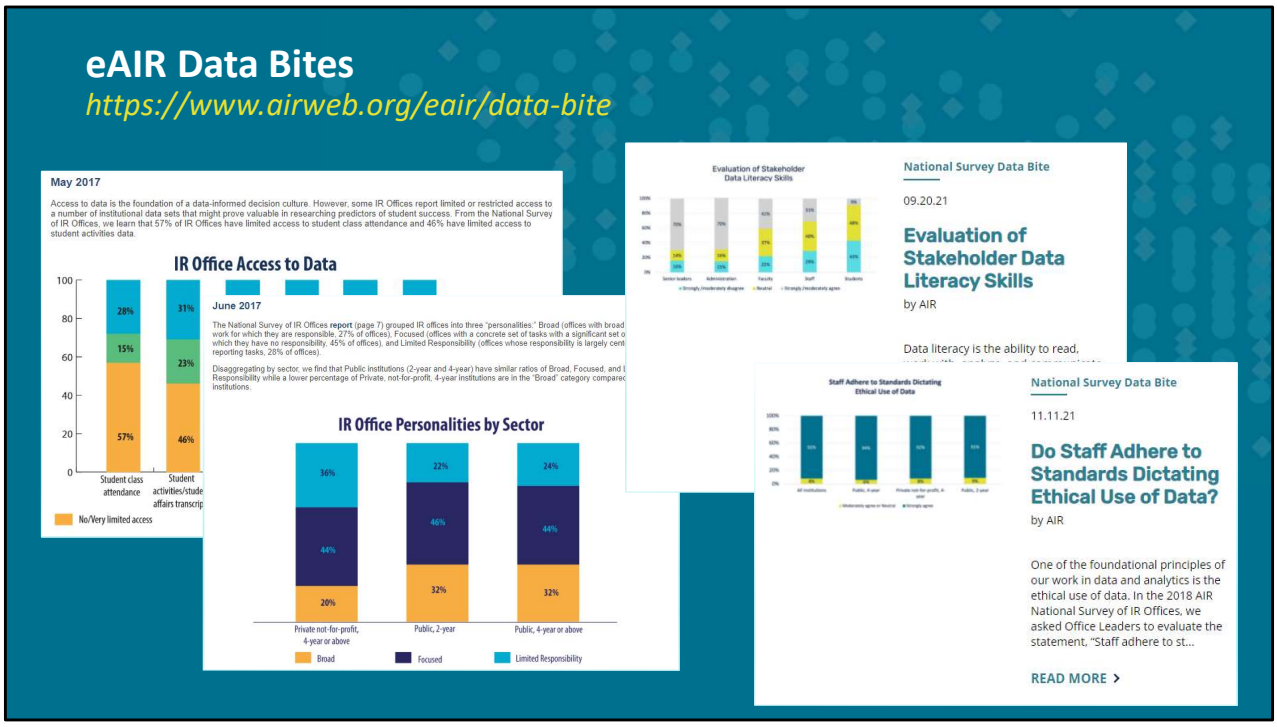
The results and analysis from the 2015 and 2018 surveys are publicly available on the AIR website at the URL you see on the slide.

For the 2015 survey, we released a comprehensive report - a screen shot of the cover is on the left.

And in 2018 data, we took a more modular approach and released a series of data briefs on popular topics such as staff roles, staff salaries, reporting relationships, and others. These briefs are also publicly available on the AIR website for your study and use.

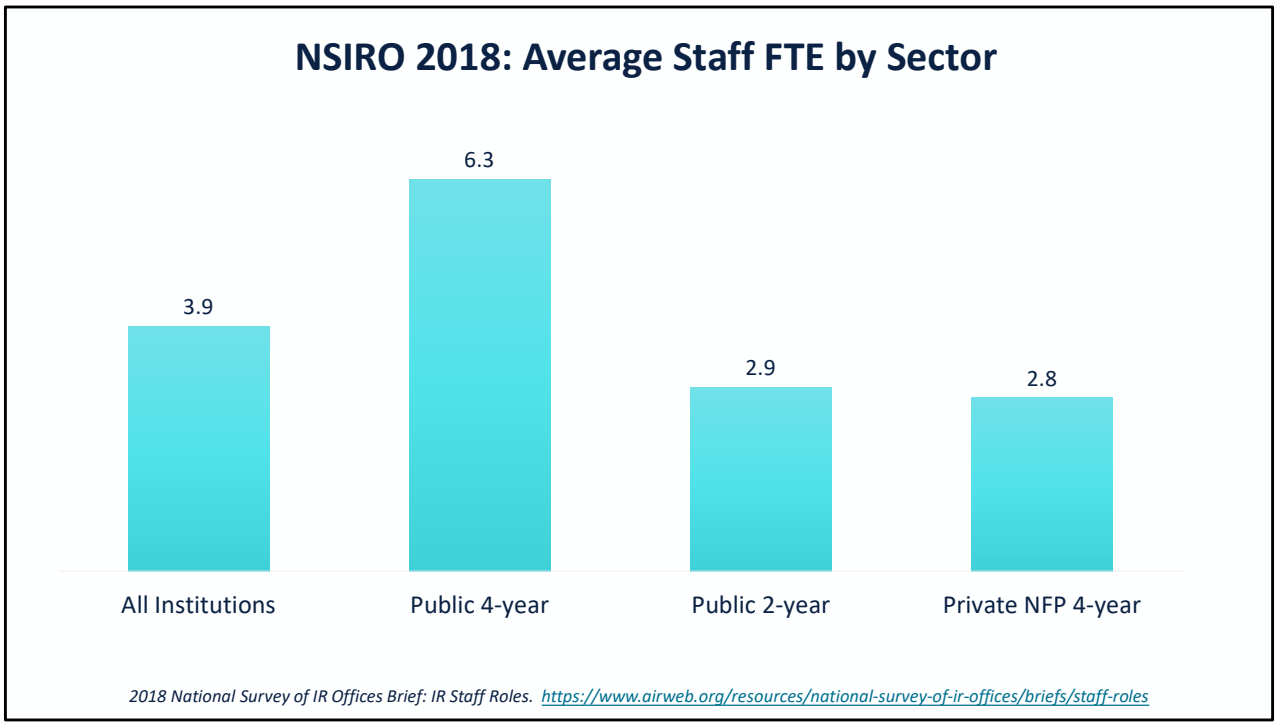


Members of the AIR staff often write short feature articles for AIR's monthly newsletter, eAIR, using data from the National Survey and we call those Data Bites. Here are a few examples that use both 2015 and 2018 data.

All of these Data Bites continue to be available for your reference and use on the AIR website.

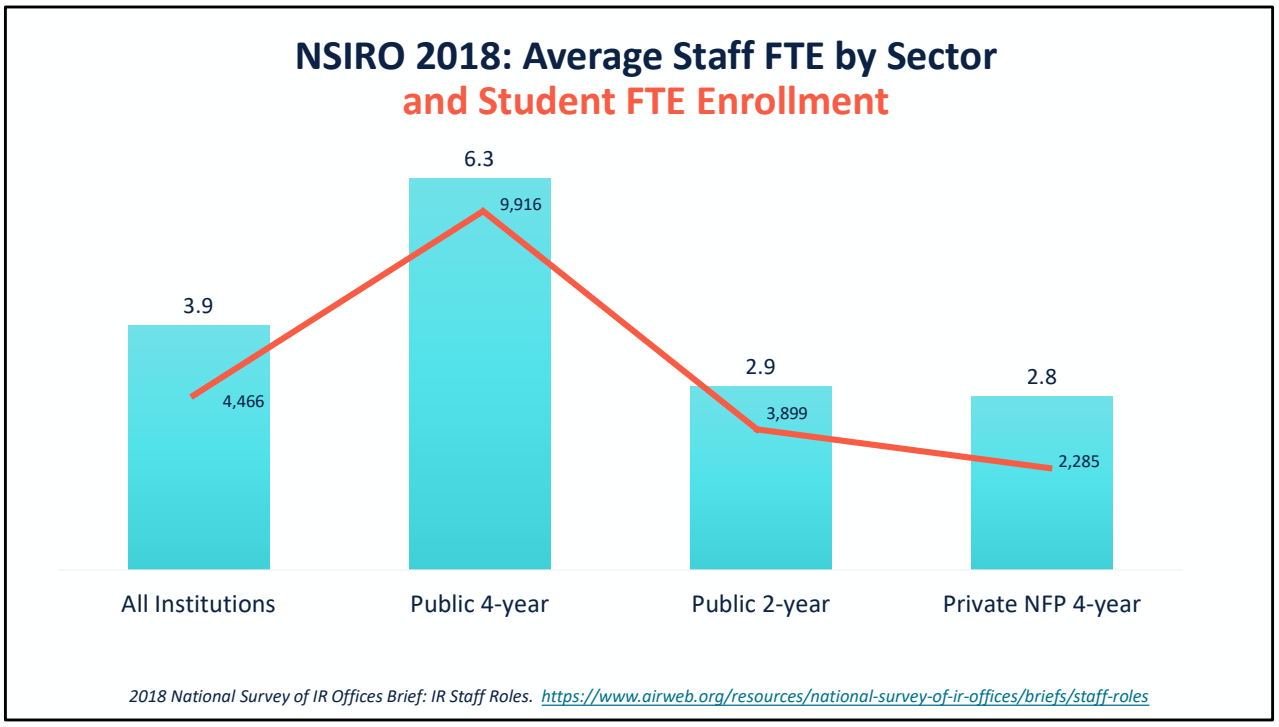
DATA EXAMPLES

Next I will highlight a few examples of the knowledge gained from the national survey. We've discovered meaningful insights about the characteristics and work in IR offices at different types of institutions across the U.S.

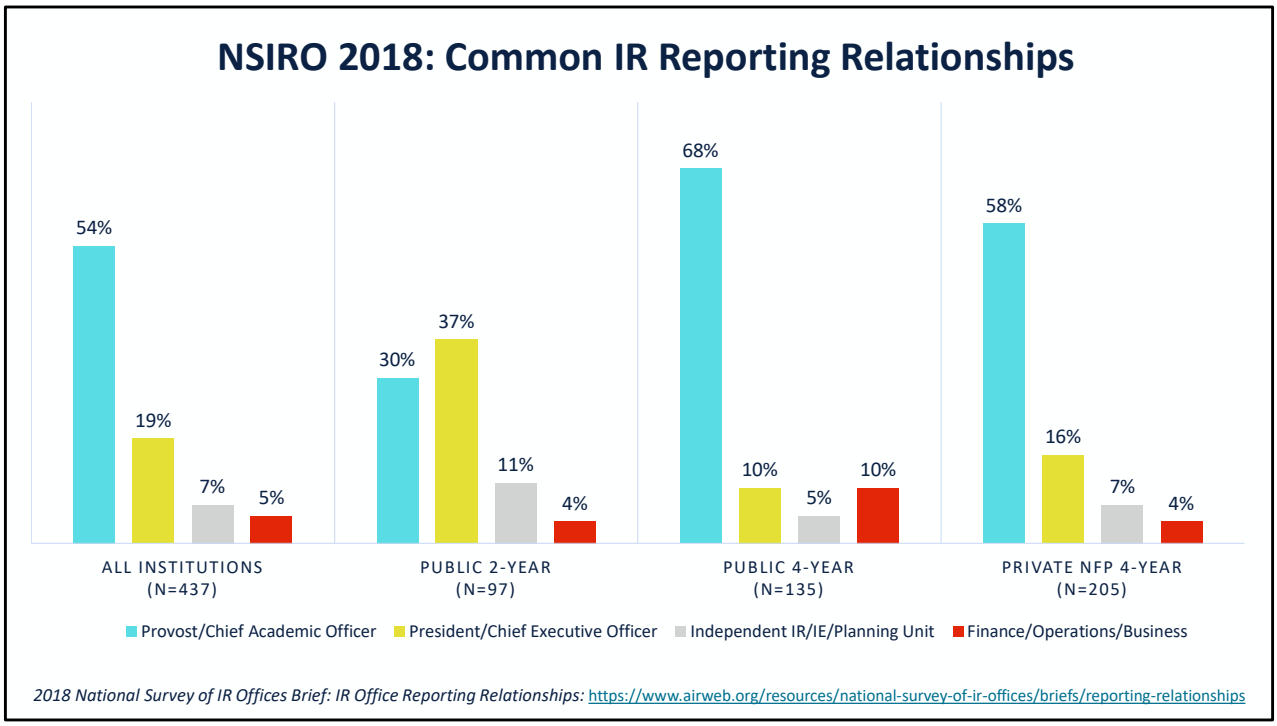


We see from the 2018 data that the average IR office had a staff FTE of 3.9. However, the size of the average IR office at a public 4-year universities was quite a bit larger than offices at either public 2-year institutions or private non for profit 4-years institutions.

The 2018 survey findings indicate that the size of the IR office staff tracks very closely with student enrollment numbers.



[click] When you overlay the average IR office staff size by sector with the average student FTE enrollment you can clearly see that correlation.



In the 2018 National Survey, we asked office leaders to identify their current reporting lines. Of the 543 institutions that answered this question, the majority of IR office leaders reported to one of four units.

Specifically, 54% report to the provost/chief academic officer (CAO), 19% report to the president/chief executive officer (CEO), 7% report to an independent IR/institutional effectiveness (IE)/planning unit, 5% report to finance or business.

However, there is marked difference in reporting

relationships by institutional sector. The most common reporting relationship is to the provost for 4 -year institutions - both public and private. While the most common reporting relationship for public 2-year institutions is to the president or CEO.

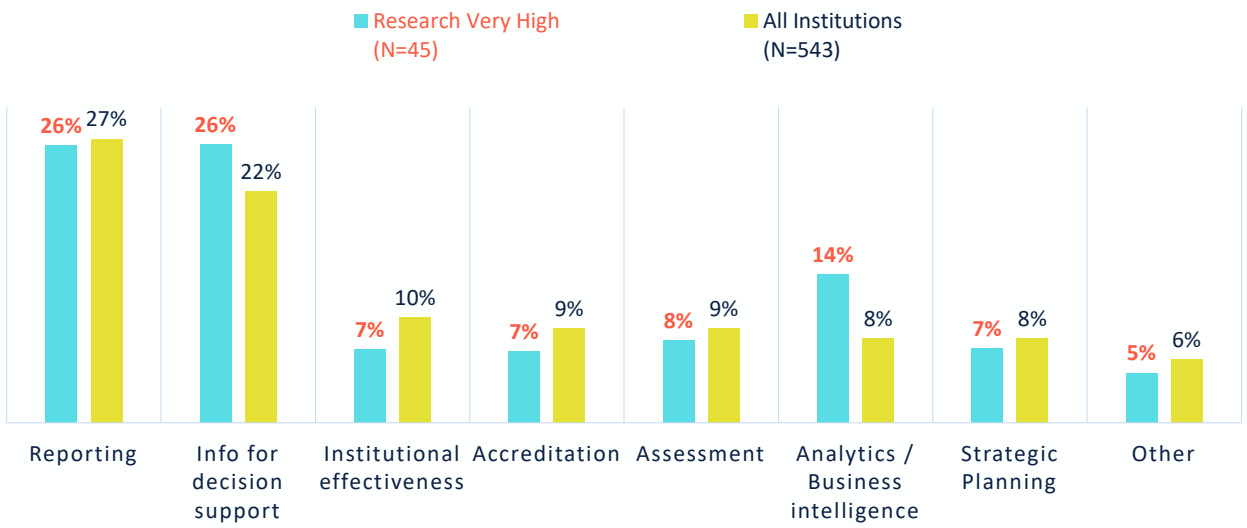
NSIRO 2015 & 2018: Changes to Most Common IR Reporting Relationships

2018 National Survey of IR Offices Brief: IR Office Reporting Relationships: https://www.airweb.org/resources/national-survey-of-ir-offices/briefs/reporting-relationships

We can also compare changes in the reporting relationships for those 376 institutions that responded to the 2015 and 2018 National Surveys.

Overall, in 2018, there was a slight increase in the number of IR offices that reported to the president as compared to 2015, and fewer IR offices report to the provost or an independent IR/IE/planning unit. But the most common reporting relationship is to the provost.

NSIRO 2018: Percentage of IR Office Work by Functional Category



2018 National Survey of IR Offices Brief: IR Staff Roles. https://www.airweb.org/resources/national-survey-of-ir-offices/briefs/staff-roles

Although the work of each IR office is tailored to meet the needs of its institution, the survey results do show us how the work of an average IR office is distributed across functional categories.

When IR office leaders were asked to estimate the percentage of effort spent on work across several categories. On average, half of their offices' work is devoted to mandatory reporting and the production of information for decision support. The first two sets of bars reading from left to right.

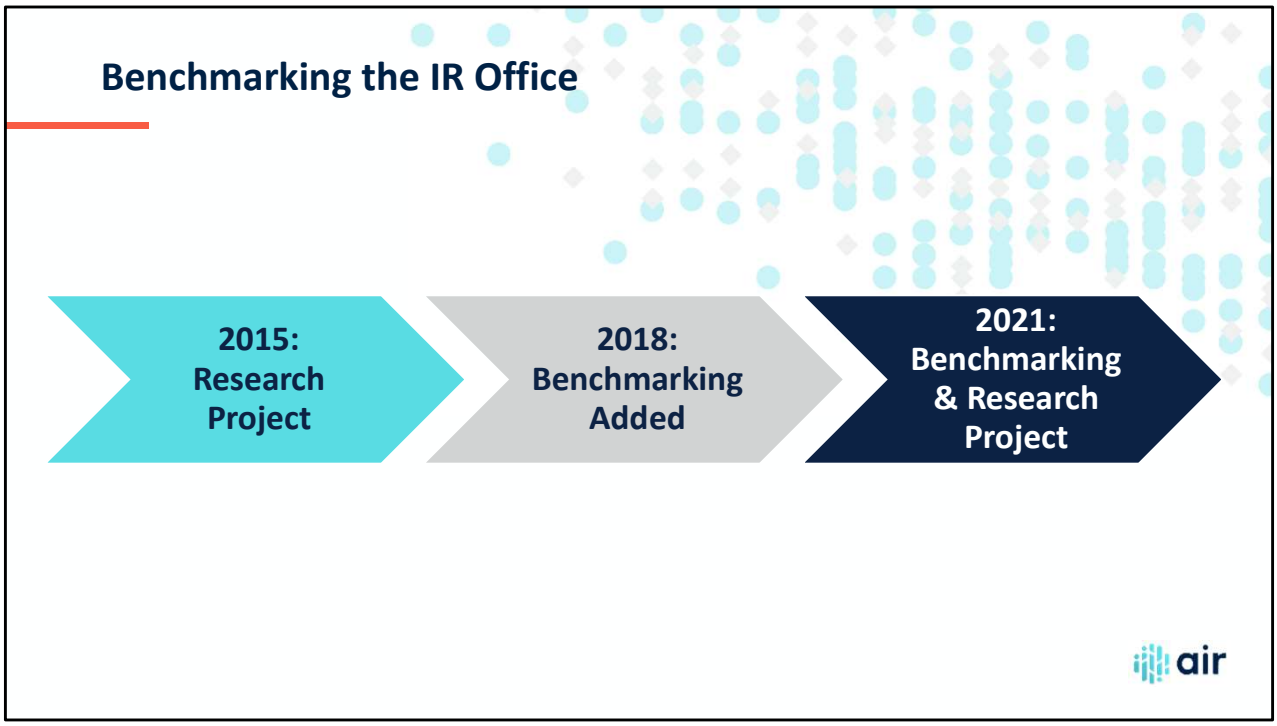
For comparison purposes, I pulled out the 45 public and private universities whose Carnegie classification was Research Very High - the orange colored numbers.

You can see that IR offices at RVH institutions spend slightly more time than average on providing decision support info and working with analytics and BI tools.

BENCHMARKING

There is much more data available from the 2015 and 2018 surveys on the AIR website through the reports, data briefs, and data bites, and I encourage you to explore more on your own.

Now I want to turn to a specific use case for the National Survey and say a few words about benchmarking.

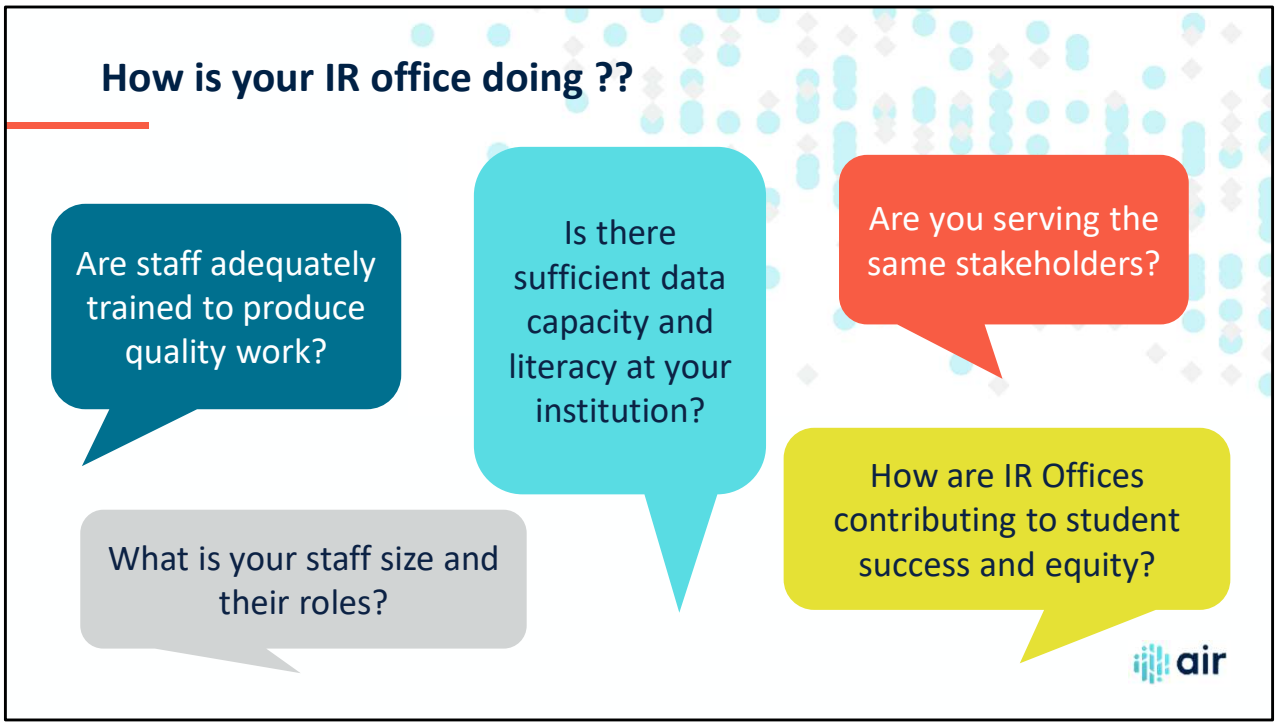


The inaugural National Survey of IR Offices in 2015 was a grant-funded, research project but, even back then, AIR knew we wanted it to become a national benchmarking project.

In 2018, we moved to a new platform to accommodate both the data collection as well as reporting and comparison tools so that users who completed the survey would have more direct access to the data to do comparisons and benchmarking.

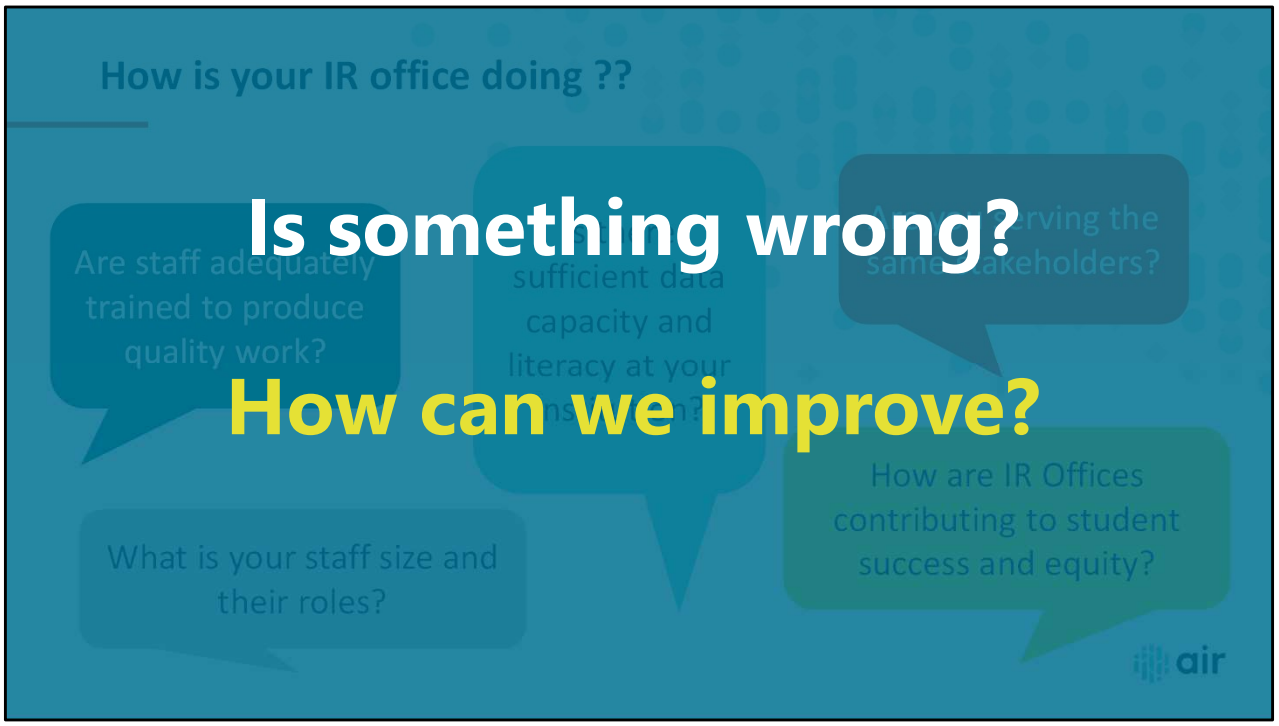
And in 2021, I would characterize the survey as both a

benchmarking and a research project. We will provide access to credible benchmarking information to help IR office leaders understand if their office is performing efficiently and effectively. At the same time, AIR will continue to provide national reports and briefs from a research perspective.



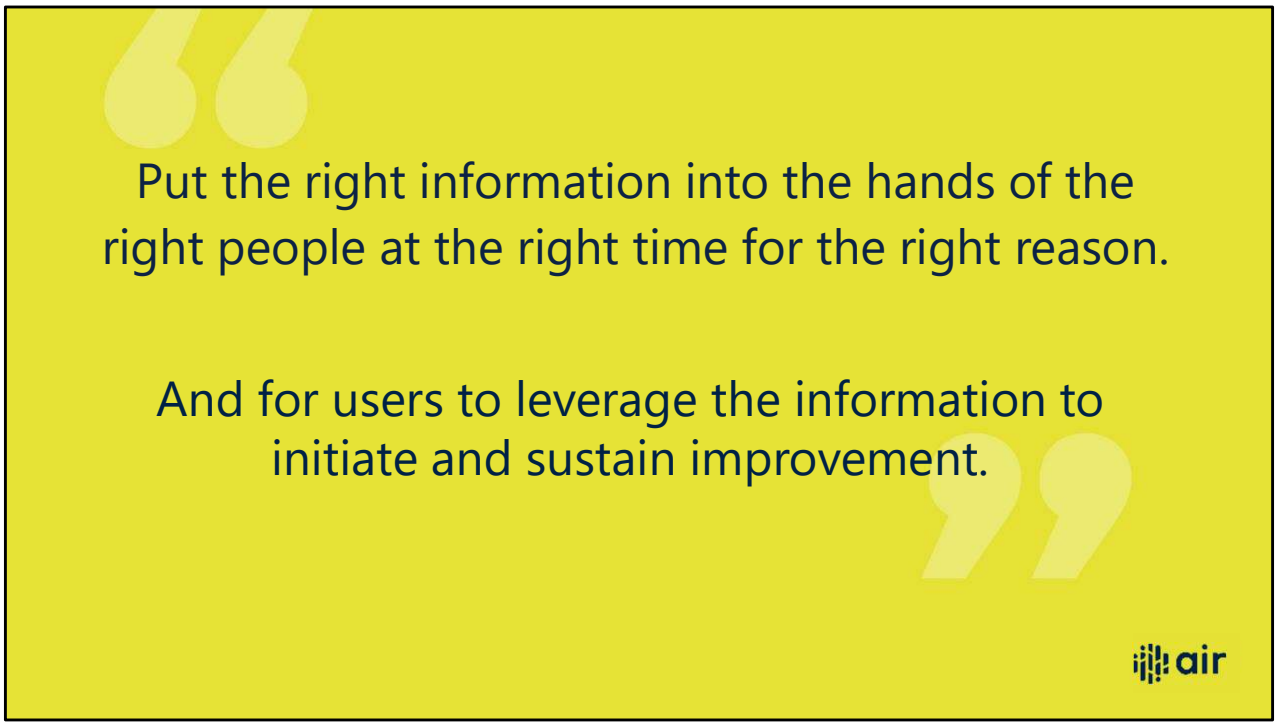
As a benchmarking resource, data from the 2021 national survey will help answer questions like

[click] Are staff adequately trained to produce quality work?
[click] Are you serving the same stakeholders as others?
[click] How are IR offices contributing to student success and equity?
[click] What is your staff size and their roles compared to other institutions?
[click] Is there sufficient data capacity and literacy at your institution?



Without evidence and data, trying to answer questions such as these it becomes a tussle of opinions. It is difficult to make a case for additional capacity, staff, responsibility, or training for your office without data showing that others are performing at higher levels or have access to additional resources.

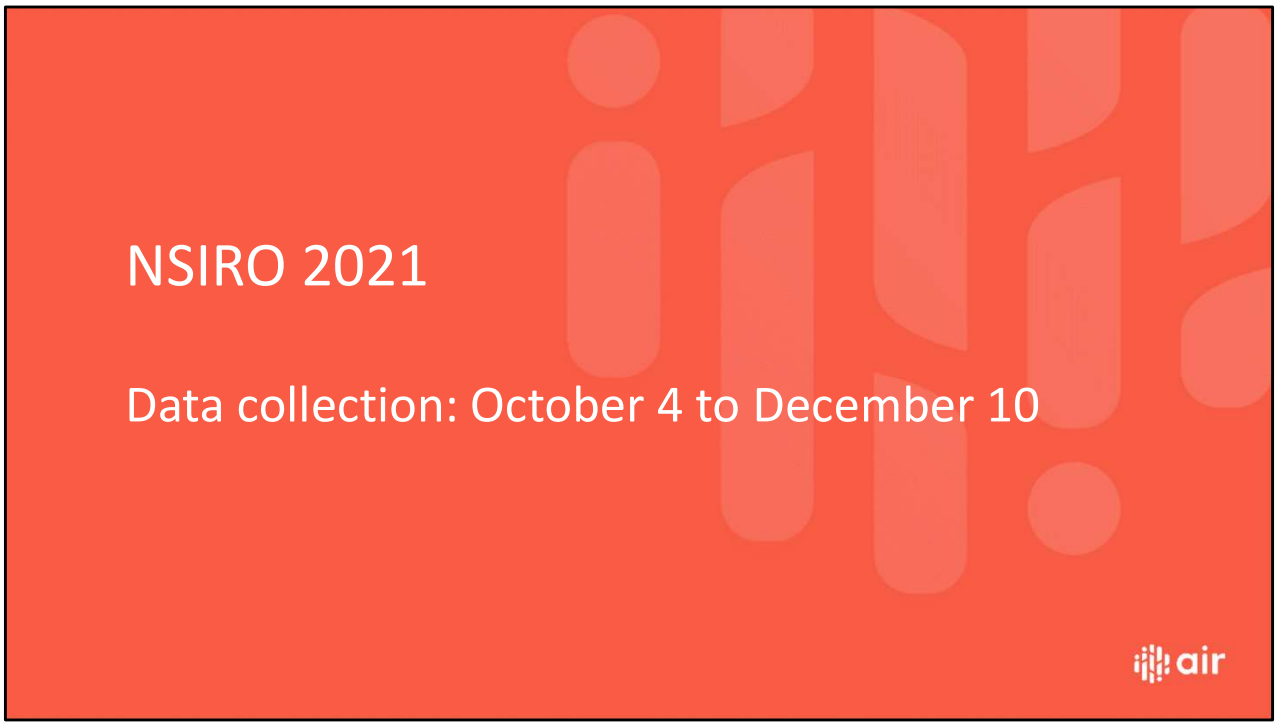
[click]Ultimately, credible benchmarking data can chance the conversation from "is something wrong?" to [click] "how can we improve?"



So, two objectives of the National Survey are

[click] Put the right information into the hands of the right people at the right time for the right reason.

[click} And for users to leverage the information to initiate and sustain improvement.

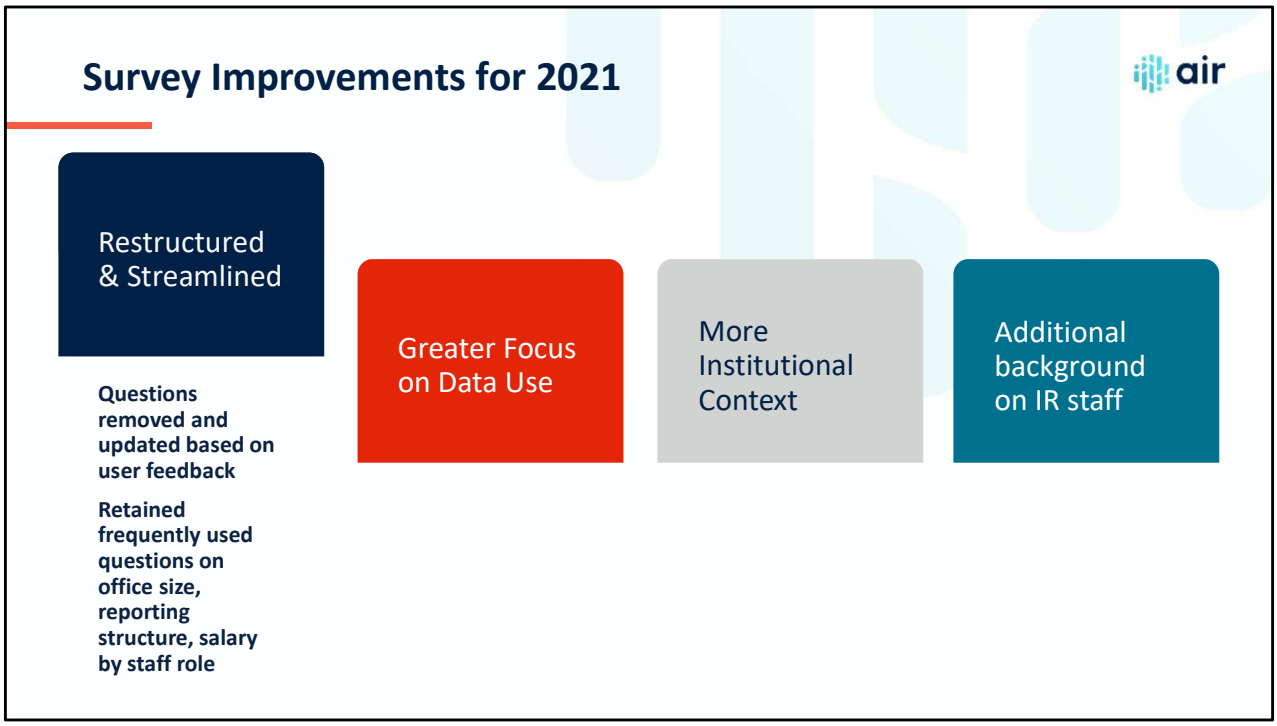


I talked at some length about the value and utility of the data collected through the National Survey.

And now I want to transition to describe the 2021 survey in more detail .

Before each new version of the National Survey is launched, AIR staff spend significant time gathering feedback and ideas from previous survey respondents and users on how the next version of the survey could be improved. We also examine how the higher education environment and context has changed. In

order to determine the questions and issues that are top of mind for higher education and our community.

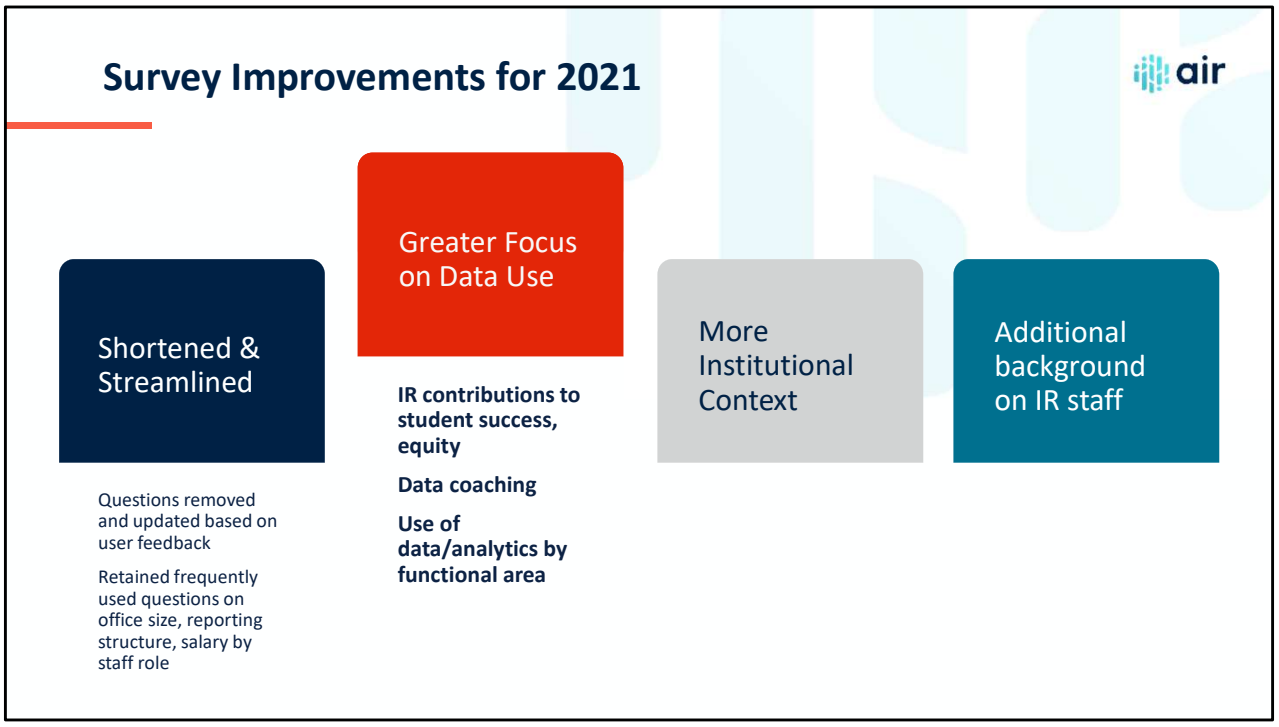


With gratitude for all of you that provided input and ideas, here are the 4 broad areas of improvement for the 2021 National Survey .

The first set of improvements involved restructuring, re-ordering, and streamlining some of the questions and topic areas so we could better focus on what was important to our users.

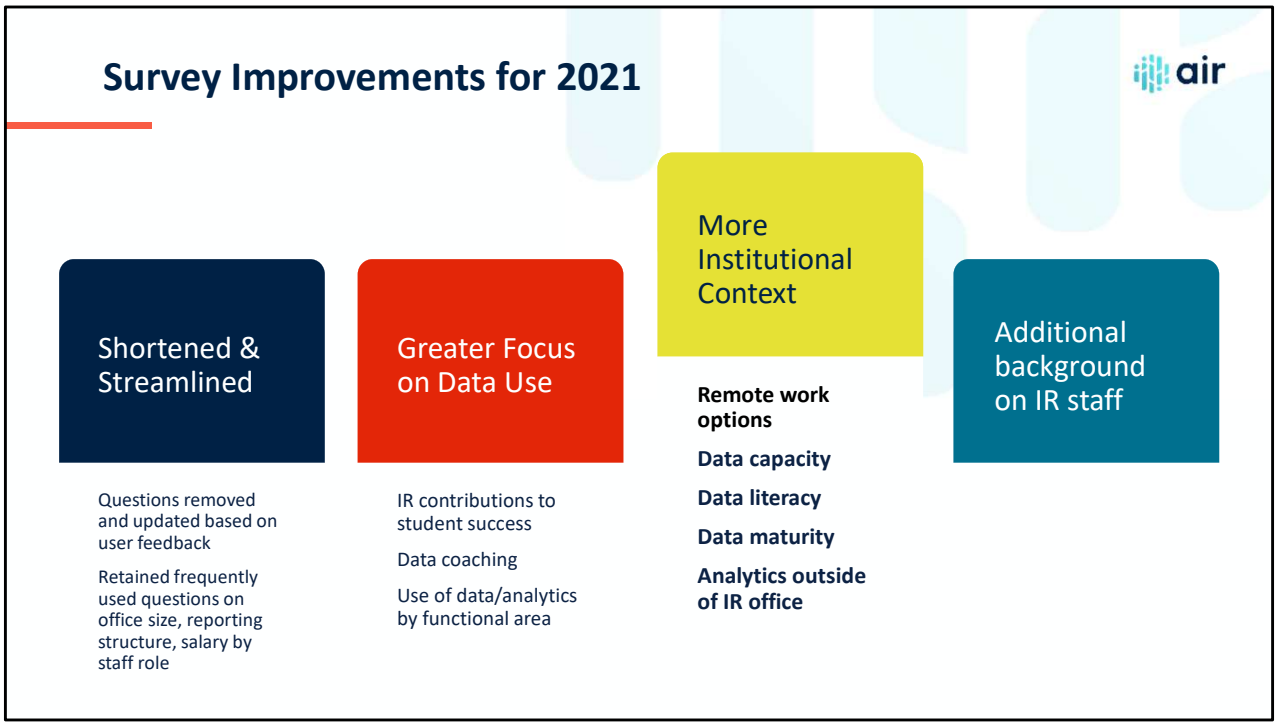
[click] Questions were removed and updated based on user feedback. But, we made sure to retain the questions that are frequently used and preserve those

trends - in particular data on office size, common reporting structures, and salaries by staff role.



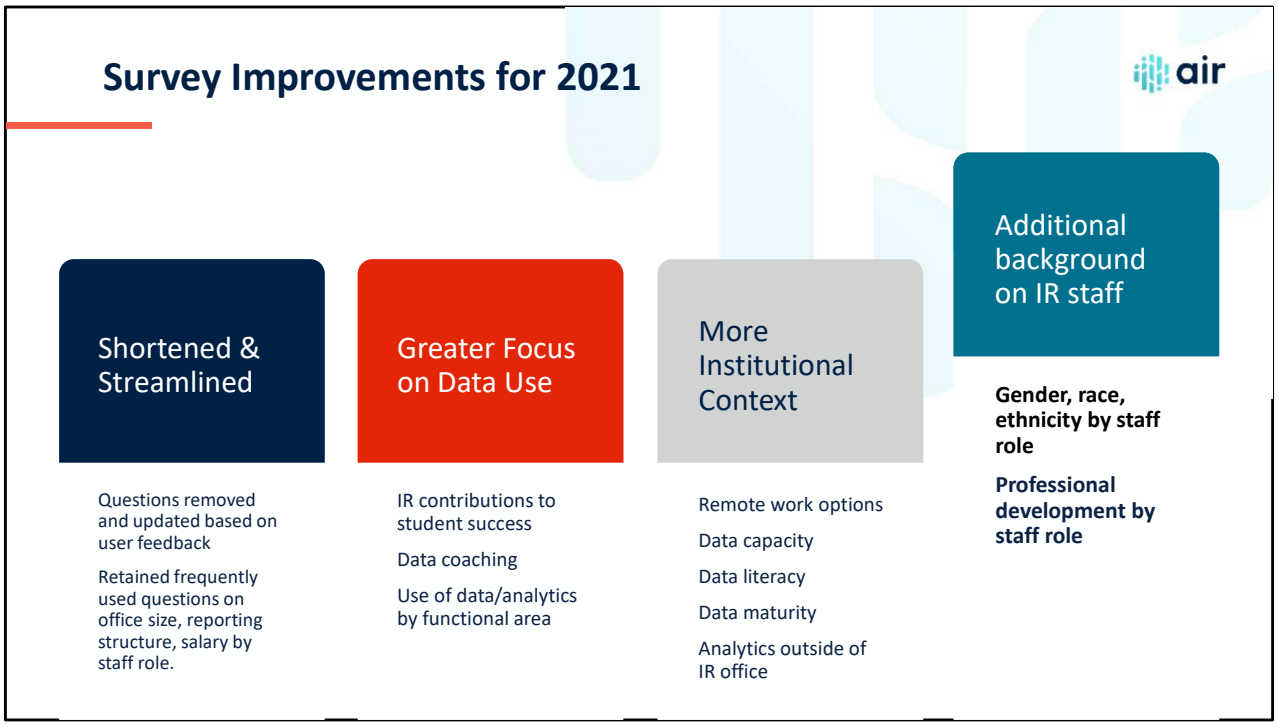
The second set of improvements is an increased focus on how data is being used within an institution.

[click] including new questions about how IR contributes to student success and equity, the work of IR in data coaching, and how data and analytical information provided by IR offices is being used within different functional areas.



The third set of improvements is to gather more information on the institutional context in which an IR office is doing its work.

[click] this includes questions on the ability of an IR office to work remotely, which is I know is of interest to many of you … as well as a better sense of the institution's data capacity, data literacy, data maturity, and the analytics work that is happening outside the IR office.



The fourth set of improvements is to gather more information on the background and experience of the IR staff

[click] for the first time we are collecting information on gender and race/ethnicity by staff role. And also based on feedback from users, additional details on the types of professional development utilized by staff in different roles.

With these improvements, the 2021 national survey will contribute to an even deeper and more nuanced

understanding of IR staff, office structures, and the context in which they do their work.

With those changes and improvement, these are the 6 sets of metrics and topics that are included on the 2021 version of the survey and here is a screen shot of what you will see when you log in to enter your institution and office data.

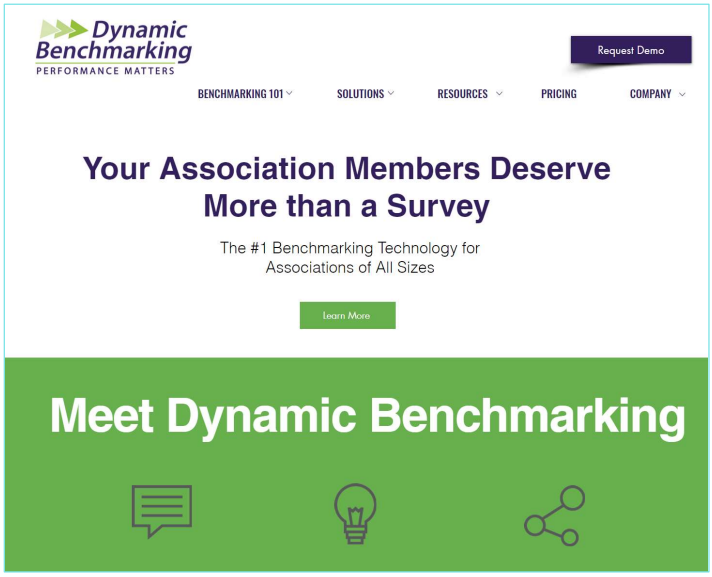
1.Institutional characteristics - IPEDS data - preloaded for you
2.Office structure and leadership
3.Staffing the office
4.Core work functions
5.Contributions to student success

6. Data capacity and literacy

Indicators - summary metrics to help check the accuracy of your data entry.

REPORTING & COMPARISON TOOLS

More about the how



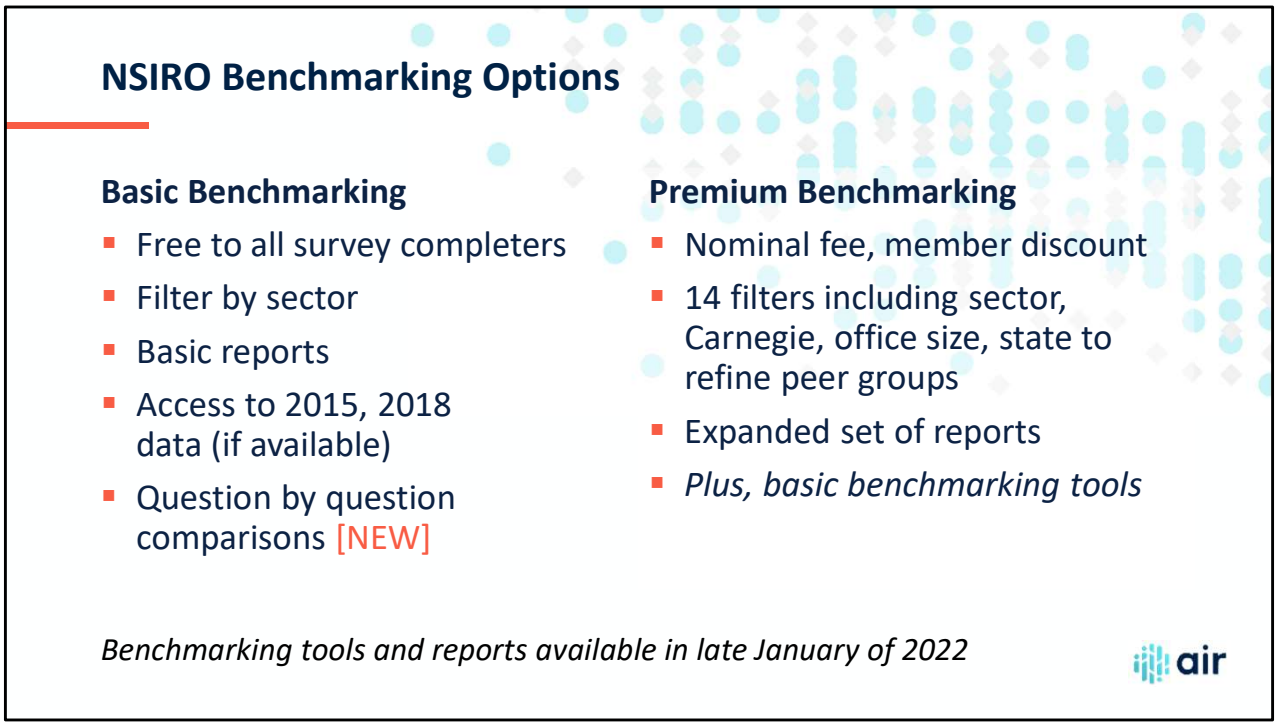
www.dynamicbenchmarking.com

In 2021, we are continuing to partner with a company called “Dynamic Benchmarking” for data collection and reporting.

Dynamic Benchmarking works specifically with associations to provide their stakeholders with actionable, real-time data, reports, and comparisons to drive improvement.

They work with several other higher education associations like ACUHO-I (Housing Officers), ACUI (college union and student activities professionals) , and

NIRSA (leaders in collegiate recreation) .



Through the Dynamic Benchmarking platform, we are able to offer two different options for benchmarking reporting and tools. This is similar to the options available in 2018 with a few important tweaks.

First is a set of "Basic Benchmarking" tools and reports that will be available at no cost to all who complete the survey.
It includes the ability to filter and compare by sector, a set of basic reports. And you will have access to your institution's data from 2015 and 2018 if you completed the survey in those years.

And a new addition for 2021 is the ability to access comparison data for all the questions on the survey on a question by question basis. I think you will find this a very valuable addition and I will show an example of how that will work in just a few minutes.

[click]
There will also be an option to upgrade to premium benchmarking for a nominal fee, that is discounted for AIR members.

The premium benchmarking includes all the features of the basic benchmarking as well as an expanded set of 14 filters that includes Carnegie classification, office size, student enrollment, state.

There will also be an expanded set of reports available for download and use.

NSIRO 2021
Question Comparisons

Available through Basic & **Premium** Benchmarking

The comparisons and reporting options within Dynamic Benchmarking will be available in late January of 2022. Right now when you log in, you will just see the option to enter your institution's data.

But let me give you a sneak preview of what they will look like in practice. With a few caveats.

•First, this is demonstration data not real data, so don't get too distracted by any data points or patterns.

•I am also not going to go through all the necessary clicks

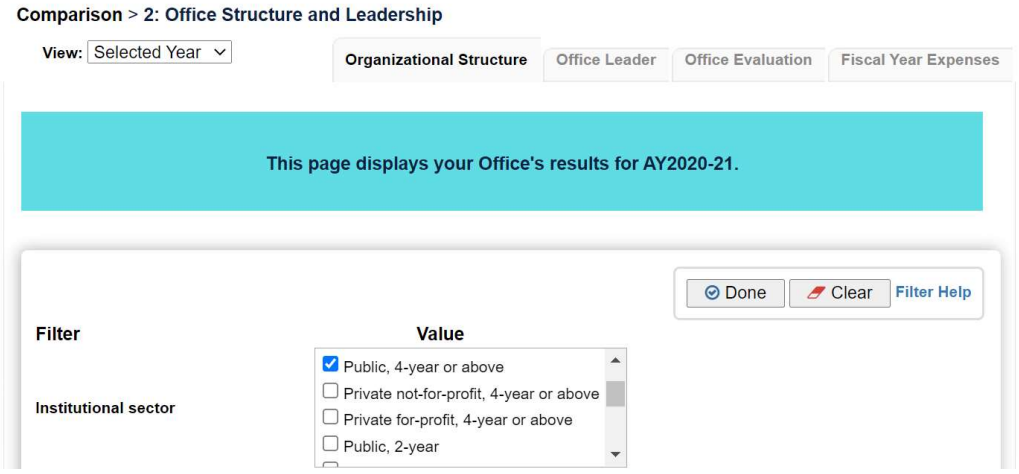
and steps but just hitting the highlights of the key features.

•And we are still working on selecting the data and visualizations for the reporting options. So I will be showing what was available in 2018.

This is screen shot of the Question Level Comparison Dashboard so I can show you how the question by question comparisons work. Remember this comparison feature is available for both the basic and premium benchmarking.

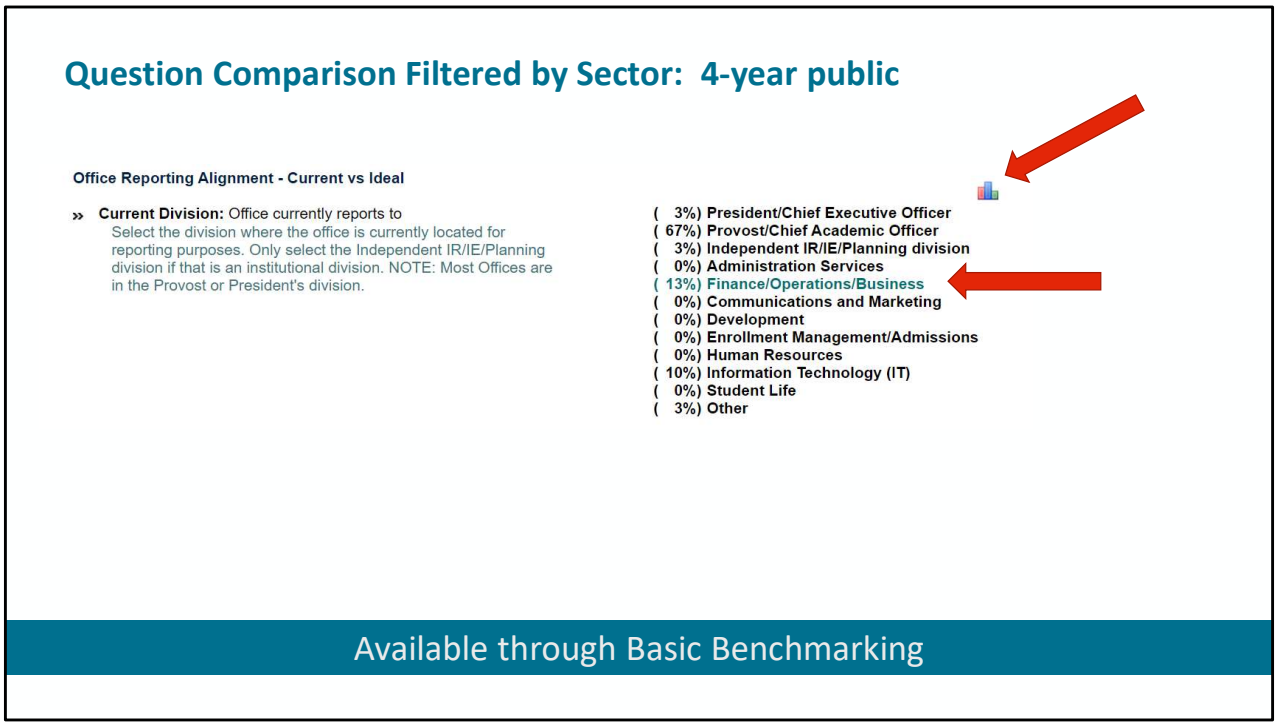
[click] Use the question on "office reporting structure" within group 2

Question Comparison Filtered by Sector: 4-year public



Available through Basic Benchmarking

Filter by sector - select 4-year public institutions as my comparison group



On the left side of this screen shot, you see the question text on the IR office's current reporting structure .

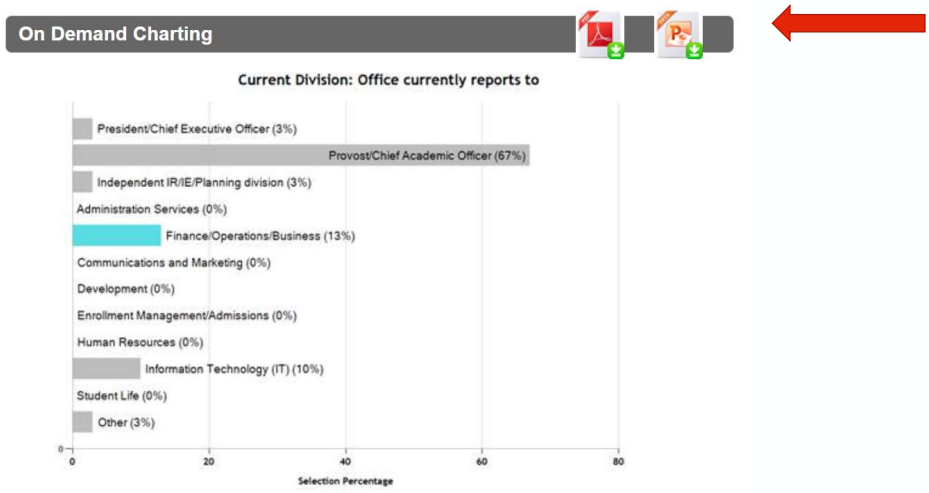
On the right side is the comparison data for this question.

[click] The response for my own IR office reporting structure is in blue/teal font and the comparison data for the other 4-year public institution are in black font. In this fake data example, you can see that 13% of 4-year public institutions who responded to the survey report to finance/business like my office. But that the most

common reporting line among 4-year publics responding to the survey is the provost office at 67%.

[click] There is also an option to view a graph of the comparisons.

Question Comparison Filtered by Sector: 4-year public



Available through Basic Benchmarking

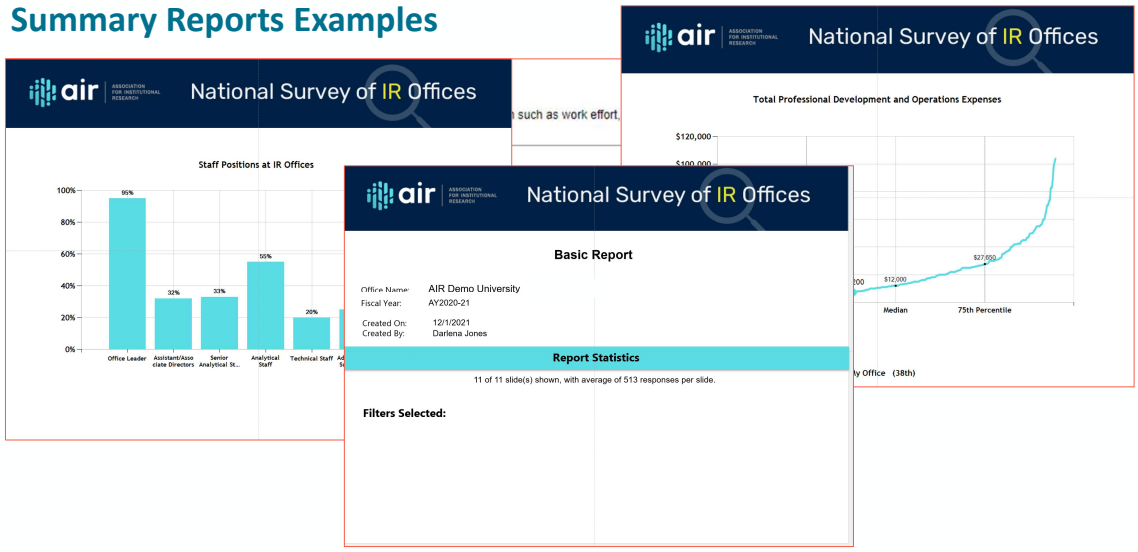
And here is a screen shot of what the graph would look like for this question on office reporting structure. Again the response to this question by my office is shown by the blue bar and the comparison group of 4-year public universities are the gray bars

[click] and you have the option of downloading this graph a PowerPoint slide or a pdf document of the graph.

And, using this question by question comparison feature, you be able to look at comparison data and graphs (as

appropriate) for each of the other 200+ questions on the survey.

Summary Reports Examples



Available through Basic Benchmarking

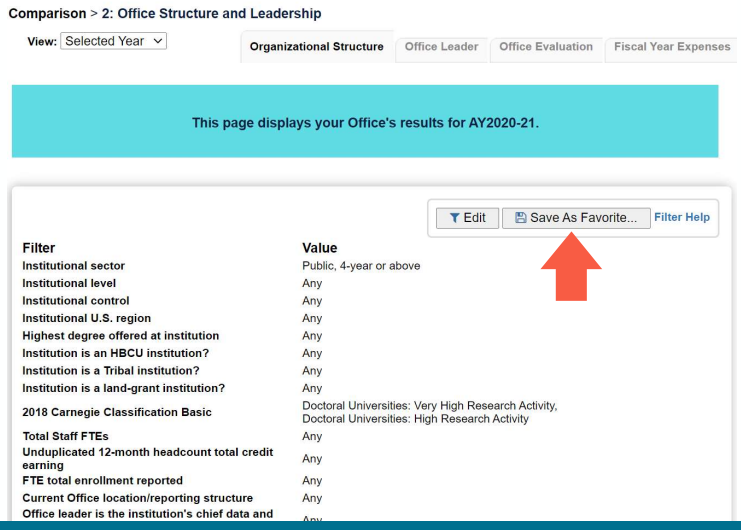
Another handy tool within the basic benchmarking is the ability to download a high-level summary report of your office as compared the selected peer group with information across a standard set of multiple survey questions - in 2018 the basic report included questions on staff size, work effort, number of clients served, and total office expenses.

[click] the report will be a pre-designed set of slides similar to what you see here that you use for presentations or reports.

And if you have entered data for 2015 and 2018, you will also be able to download a report with a set of slides with longitudinal data.

We are still working on selecting the specific questions and comparisons to include in these two reports.

Premium Benchmarking: Additional Filters to Refine Comparisons



- 2018 Carnegie Classifications
- FTE student enrollment
- State
- Office Staff FTE
- Plus 10 more filters

Available through **Premium Benchmarking**

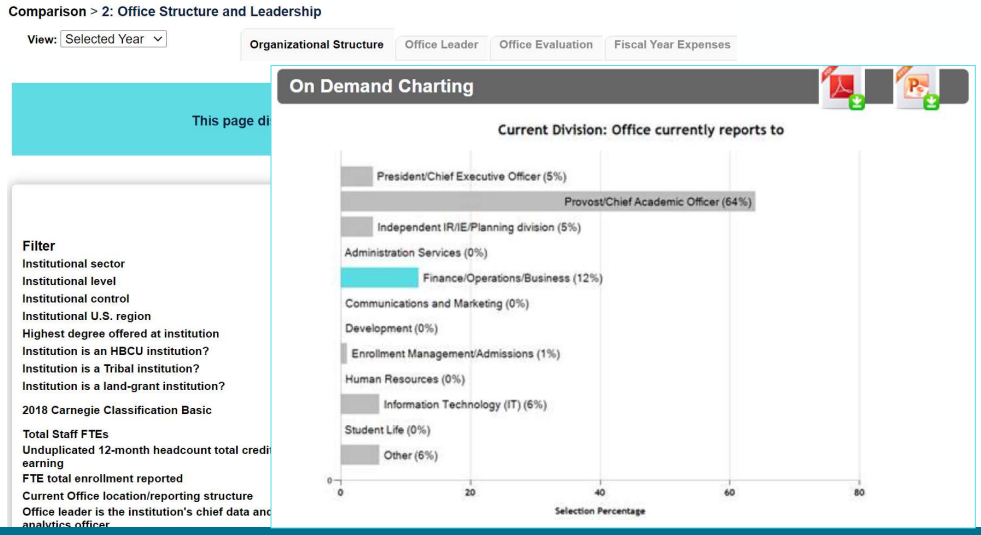
Now I will turn to an example of what is possible with the premium version of the benchmarking. Remember that everything I just discussed as included in the basic benchmarking is also available for premium subscribers.

A primary advantage of the premium benchmarking is the ability to refine your peer comparison group.

[click]
Continuing my previous example, I could further customize my 4-year public university comparison group by state or perhaps student enrollment.

[click]
And then I could also save that combination of filters for future use.

Premium Benchmarking: Additional Filters to Refine Comparisons

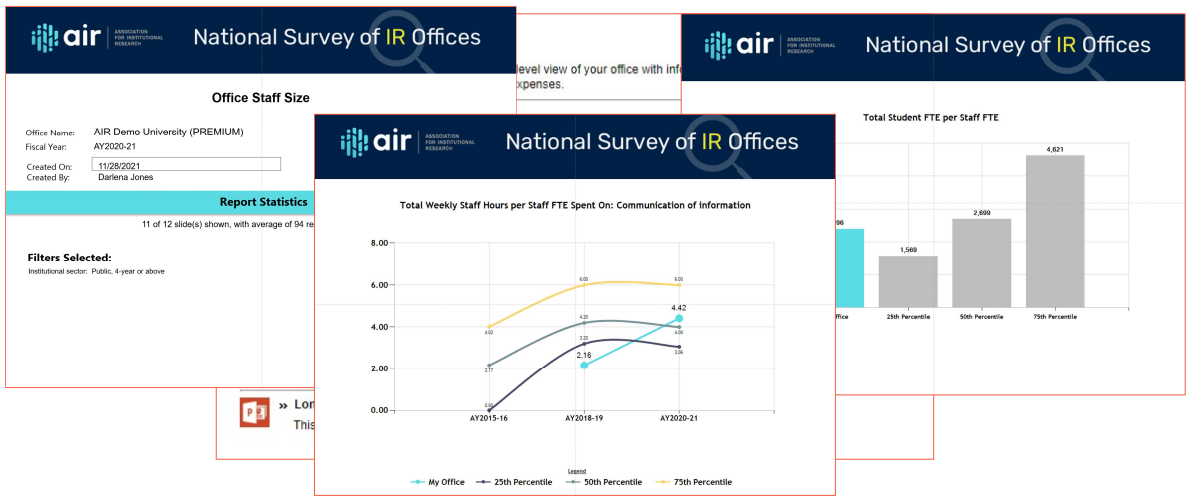


Available through **Premium Benchmarking**

[click] In this example, I created a comparison group of 4-year public universities that fit within the Carnegie classifications of research high or research very high.

[click] and here is the comparison chart using my new peer group.

Premium Benchmarking: Additional Report Options



Available through **Premium Benchmarking**

The other advantage of the premium benchmarking is access to a greater number of summary report options. These are screen shots of the premium report options from 2018 and [click] examples of the pre-designed PowerPoint slides to give you an idea of how the reports are structured.

However, as with the basic reports, we are still working on finalizing the exact content and number of reports that will be available within the premium benchmarking.

NSIRO Benchmarking Options

Basic Benchmarking

- Free to all survey completers
- Filter by sector
- Basic reports
- Access to 2015, 2018 data (if available)
- Question by question comparisons [NEW]

Premium Benchmarking

- Nominal fee, member discount
- 14 filters including sector, Carnegie, office size, state to refine peer groups
- Expanded set of reports
- *Plus, basic benchmarking tools*

Benchmarking tools and reports available in late January of 2022

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Those are just a few examples of how you might use the National Survey data and comparison tools to better understand and benchmark how your IR office compares to others. And also a demonstration of the different options within the basic and premium benchmarking.

We will continue to share more details and information about the reporting options as we get closer to their release in January.

NSIRO Benchmarking Pricing

	Survey Completed by 12/10/2021	AIR member	Not AIR member
Basic Benchmarking	√	Free	Free
Early Premium Benchmarking (before 1/31/22)	√	$249	$399
Regular Premium Benchmarking (after 1/31/22)	√	$349	$499

Benchmarking tools and reports available in late January of 2022

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However, it is important to know that to have access to any of the tools, you must complete the required questions within the National Survey for your institution. If you don't participate, you won't have the ability to access the tools.

If you complete the survey, you will automatically have access to the basic benchmarking.

If you would like to access the additional tools within the premium version, the cost is $249 for AIR members if you purchase before January 31. You can see the other

price points on this slide.

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

I want to conclude this presentation by thanking all of you who have already completed the 2021 National Survey of IR office.

For those who have not completed the survey, I invite you to do so before the deadline on December 10.

By participating you will be making an important contribution to our collective knowledge and understanding of our continually evolving profession and its practices.

Completing the survey also has a direct benefit for you as a participant through access to a set of data and comparison tools for improvement efforts within your own office.

AIR plans to share the knowledge and information we gain from the survey back out to the higher education community through reports, briefs, and presentations. Internally, we will use the information to support our strategy and planning so that we can continue to align AIR products, resources, and services with the needs of the field.

In all these applications, a large, diverse set of respondents will help insure the results are a comprehensive and accurate representation of the IR offices within US higher education.

Thank you for taking the time to attend this webinar today. We now have a few minutes for questions.

Thank You!

NSIRO Webpage: https://www.airweb.org/NationalSurvey

Questions: NSIRO@airweb.org