The best way to gauge how manufacturers are doing during the nation’s recovery from the recession: just ask them.

Since 1994, the Kansas City Fed has surveyed manufacturers in the Tenth Federal Reserve District, which is western Missouri, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, Wyoming, Colorado and northern New Mexico, about changes in production, orders and inventories.

The manufacturing survey is the Kansas City Fed’s primary source of timely regional information on several economic indicators, such as prices, production and capital spending.

“The survey provides real-time information that is extremely valuable and frequently offers anecdotal perspective from behind the numbers,” says Megan Williams, an associate economist at the Kansas City Fed’s Oklahoma City Branch, who administers the survey.

The results are a source of information not only about the District’s manufacturing sector, but also for specific variables, such as prices and capital spending, for which no independent data regionally exist.

Along with other regional surveys, the District’s results also can play a key role in assessing the state of the national manufacturing sector.

Staff from the Kansas City Fed’s Oklahoma City Branch oversee the process, which is outlined here.

Read survey results and sign up for e-mail alerts at KansasCityFed.org.

TEXT BY BRYE STEEVES, EDITOR
ILLUSTRATIONS BY CASEY MCKINLEY,
SENIOR GRAPHIC DESIGNER
Links to a secure online survey are e-mailed to the manufacturers toward the end of each month. The survey includes 13 standard questions, as well as special questions relevant to current regional or national economic trends.

Kansas City Fed staff generally receive upward of 130 responses each month. Survey replies, which must be submitted online within four business days, are tallied by a website application.

Kansas City Fed staff then create a report, which summarizes the findings for each major question. Changes in indicators, such as production, shipments, and prices of raw materials and finished products, are recorded.

**On the last Thursday of the month, the report is distributed.**

It's released to the media. Results are published and analyzed by regional and national media outlets, as well as various economic websites.

It's used in preparation for Federal Open Market Committee meetings.

It's used by economists for research. Accumulated results also help identify the effectiveness of the survey.