Guide to Commissioning a TRICS Standardised Assessment Methodology (SAM) Survey 2024

Ian Coles (Project Director, TRICS Consortium Limited)

November 2023

This note provides guidance on how to commission a TRICS SAM survey and the various stages of the process and contains the following sections:

Introduction

Any organisation can commission TRICS to manage, undertake and deliver a TRICS Standardised Assessment Methodology (SAM) survey. TRICS delivers these specifically commissioned surveys by working with one of our experienced TRICS-approved data collection contractors, who in turn communicates with the commissioning client to gather all of the supporting information necessary to populate the TRICS data collection forms (to ensure that the survey results can be certified as TRICS-compliant following a successful data input and validation testing process undertaken by the TRICS team).

TRICS can manage and deliver a wide variety of SAM surveys, in terms of development type, scale and complexity. We have managed many one-off surveys as well as repeat surveys at developments going through various phases of build-out, and our experience in dealing with such a wide range of surveys means that any commissioning organisation can be assured that our work through the various stages of the process will be efficient and of high quality, right up to the point when the survey results are fully validated and ready to be delivered. Having your survey managed by TRICS and certified as being TRICS-compliant means that it has been independently managed and delivered by an organisation well known within the transport planning and development management industry, with a long-established reputation for accuracy and attention to detail.

This note details the TRICS SAM survey commissioning process, from the first enquiry through to the delivery of the finalised TRICS data outputs and certificates of TRICS compliance.

Initial Client Enquiries

A client interested in commissioning a TRICS SAM survey first gets in touch with the TRICS team. They can contact the TRICS Project Administrator at anne-marie.kanor@trics.org in the first instance, to provide some basic background information of the development they want surveyed. This should include the name of the development, the development type, and a plan of the development's vehicular and pedestrian access points, to give an initial indication of the potential scale and complexity of the development. The client should also indicate when they are looking for a survey to take place. There are two TRICS survey windows, which run from March to June and September (after the school holidays end) to November each year. Once this initial information is understood, we can move on to raising and sending a TRICS survey agreement.

Raising and Signing a TRICS Survey Agreement

A TRICS survey agreement (template also available to download freely at www.trics.org) is raised and forwarded two months prior to the month that the survey has been requested to take place. For example, if a survey is requested to take place in March (at any time during that month), the survey agreement would be raised and sent at the beginning of January. The survey agreement includes all of the TRICS terms and conditions with regards to the commissioning of a SAM survey, so clients should read and understand these from the outset.

Upon receipt of the survey agreement, the client is required to sign and date a copy, and send this back to TRICS, along with a purchase order of £639 + VAT which covers the fixed fees for TRICS undertaking a site visit and then putting together a detailed TRICS survey specification. Should no agreement be signed and returned, along with the necessary PO, within a period of 30 days from the date on the agreement, the agreement will no longer be valid and the survey will be cancelled.

If an organisation other than the client is to be paying for the survey, then this organisation will be directly invoiced by TRICS for the fixed site visit and survey specification fee upon receipt of the PO. If the client is responsible for paying for the survey, then no invoice would be sent at this stage. When TRICS receives the signed survey agreement and the fixed fees PO, we can then move on to making arrangements for a site visit to take place.

Undertaking a Site Visit

TRICS will then liaise with the client to agree a date for our site visit to take place. For more complex developments, TRICS would ask the client to meet a member of the TRICS team at the development on the day, so that the requirements of the survey can be fully understood by both parties. For more straightforward developments this is not necessary, as the TRICS team has a lot of experience in visiting a wide variety of sites and establishing survey requirements.

A TRICS SAM site visit will follow the approach of our multi-modal methodology, in that the development will be toured to establish detailed information such as all vehicular and pedestrian access points, areas under construction, the possibility of through-trips (both vehicular and non-vehicular), and any other special survey conditions that will be required. A site visit will fully establish what will be required to undertake and deliver a multi-modal survey to full TRICS-specifications. This then allows TRICS to transfer the information gathered from the site visit into a more detailed TRICS survey specification.

Producing a TRICS Survey Specification

Following the site visit, the TRICS team will then produce the detailed TRICS survey specification, also following our multi-modal methodology. This document provides information the number of site accesses (both vehicular and non-vehicular), plus all other survey conditions such as potential through-trips etc. It then provides detailed instructions for each enumerator (surveyor), in terms of where each enumerator should be positioned, what observational counts should be undertaken, and what interviews are to take place. These instructions are provided in clear language for every enumerator location, which together provides a complete blueprint of instructions that are necessary to be followed to undertake a TRICS SAM survey to full TRICS standards.

The enumerator instructions are accompanied by a number of site access photographs, and for larger and more complex developments this is also supplemented by an annotated plan that shows the photograph positions on an overall plan of the development. All of this information is designed so that our TRICS-approved data collection contractors can fully understand the survey requirements. This allows a quote for all work associated with the project to then be forwarded by TRICS to the client for authorisation.

Providing a Final Quote to the Client and Requesting Authorisation

At this stage of the process TRICS will be in a position to provide the client with an accurate quote for all work associated with the SAM survey. It should be noted that this final quote will include the fixed £639 + VAT site visit and survey specification fee (for which a PO would have already been provided for), unless an organisation other than the client is paying for the survey, in which case the site visit and survey specification fee would have already been invoiced.

Once the final quote has been received, the client can then decide whether to provide authorisation for the survey to go ahead. Any authorisation must be received within 30 days of the quote being provided, along with the purchase order for the final amount quoted. If the client does not authorise the survey within 30 days (or requests its cancellation during this 30-day period), then they will be invoiced for the fixed site visit fee (as TRICS would have already received the PO for this at the earlier stage) and the survey will be cancelled. It should be noted that should the survey be requested at any later stage after being cancelled, then the whole process would need to start from the beginning, with a new survey agreement and site visit and survey specification fee applicable.

If the client wishes to authorise the survey, then upon receipt of the final fee PO the survey will be formally commissioned.

Survey Preparations Following Formal Commissioning

Once the SAM survey has been formally commissioned, with the PO for the final survey fees being provided to TRICS within the 30-day period from the provision of the final quote, TRICS then provides the client with contact details of our TRICS-approved data collection contractor (who are also provided with the contact details of the client). This begins the process of making survey preparations.

The data collection contractor will get in touch with the client to agree a survey date, and to commence the process of obtaining the necessary supporting information which is necessary to populate the TRICS data collection forms (and for the data to be certified as TRICS-compliant). The client will need to liaise directly with the contractor to supply all of the requested information. This information will vary depending on the development type being surveyed. For example, if the development is residential, the contractor will require information on the numbers of occupied and unoccupied dwellings and the dwelling types split at the time of the survey (private/non-private, building types, etc), along with the site area in hectares (of the fully constructed and occupied parts of the development only) and the site area excluding publicly accessible features (all of which are vital for TRICS surveys to be complete). If the development is of a different type (for example an office), then the information to be collected will be items such as the Gross Floor Area (GFA) of all floors of the site building(s), and details of the numbers of employees registered with the development, etc.

To make all of this easier for the client to understand, a TRICS guidance note will be provided to the client by the contractor which explains in clear detail the definitions of every item of supporting data that is required. It should be noted that by signing the TRICS survey agreement, the client agrees to provide this supporting information to the contractor.

The contractor may ask the client if they can visit the development prior to the survey taking place, so that they can become familiar with the site accesses and general layout of the development (and possibly meet with the client). This is encouraged to enhance the contractor's understanding of the development to be surveyed. It would also be a good opportunity for the client to ask the contractor any questions they may have about the mechanics of the survey that is to take place.

It may be necessary for the contractor to use video equipment as part of the survey. If this is required, the contractor will request permission from the client for such equipment to be installed. The survey agreement provides full detail on data protection issues associated with the use of video equipment.

For residential developments, the contractor will visit the site prior to the survey taking place to inform residents of the impending survey by a letterbox drop of explanatory letters (which have been written by TRICS). If the development is too large for this to be practical, the information will be provided on internal street furniture (or within blocks of apartments wherever these can be easily visible). For non-residential developments, TRICS encourages the client to inform its staff at the development of what is going to be taking place, so that they are aware of the survey in advance.

Undertaking the Survey

A typical residential survey will commence at 0700 and end at 1900 (although in Greater London the end time is extended to 2100). A survey at an office would usually start at 0700 and end at 1900 wherever it is located, unless longer hours are initially requested by the client. The survey hours can vary at other development types. TRICS can provide some guidance on start and end times at the initial stage of the process.

On the day of the survey the contractors will be identifiable by their high visibility clothing, and there will be a supervisor present who can answer any questions that people at the development (or the client) may want to ask. The survey will typically involve some observation and counts, plus an element of interviewing of people arriving at the development on foot. These interviews will normally be very short, asking each person what their main method of transport (by distance) has been, each time they arrive at and depart from the development. These interviews will be supplemented by head counts to ensure that the interview sample can be factored up to 100%. It is of course possible that someone could be interviewed on more than two occasions during the survey duration should they leave the development and come back at a later time, as it is important that every inbound and outbound trip is recorded for a TRICS survey to be complete.

Post-Survey Data Processing by the Contractor

Following the completion of the survey, the contractor will collate all counts and interviews, and will start processing these so that they can be provided to TRICS on our standard data collection forms. These forms will also include the supporting information that has been provided to the contractor by the client as discussed earlier in this note. Therefore, it is important that the client provides this supporting information to the contractor as early as possible (preferably prior to the survey day), as any delay in providing this information will mean that there will be a delay in the contractor completing the data collection form for the survey and subsequently forwarding it to TRICS for data input and validation testing.

Depending on the scale and complexity of the survey, it can take some time for the contractor to process all of the raw survey data into its final format to submit to TRICS for input and validation testing. However, TRICS does expect the data collection form to be forwarded to us within a few weeks of a survey taking place and will contact the contractor if there is any significant delay for updates on progress as part of managing the project.

Data Input and Validation of Survey Data by TRICS

Once the data collection form for the survey has been received in full by TRICS, the data undergoes input into the TRICS database and a process of scrutinous validation testing. Clients should note that by signing the TRICS survey agreement, they agree that the data that is input into the TRICS database will become part of that database and will become accessible to all TRICS user organisations in the next quarterly database update. The data will also become the intellectual property of TRICS.

The validation testing process has evolved over many years to become a detailed and highly scrutinous exercise that tests the data in a variety of ways. There are numerous structured logic and reasoning checks that take place, and as the TRICS team go through the validation test a list of validation queries are raised, which are then forwarded to the contractor so that clarification/amendment can then take place. This process goes back and forth between TRICS and the contractor until TRICS is satisfied that all validation queries have been successfully answered. The client should be aware that the contractor may need to contact them for clarification on certain validation queries whenever this is necessary. This is a vital part of the process, as for a TRICS SAM survey to be considered TRICS-compliant it must successfully pass through the validation process in full. Again, any delays from the client at this stage will mean a delay in the data being fully validated and the finalised results sent to the client.

Provision of Final TRICS Outputs and Certificate of Compliance to the Client

Once the validation process for the survey has been successfully completed, the survey formally becomes TRICS-compliant. TRICS then sends the finalised TRICS outputs (as they appear on the TRICS database) to the client, along with the certificate of TRICS compliance, which concludes the work of TRICS on the project.

TRICS will also send the raw data (the completed TRICS data collection form) to the client upon request. However, the client should note that this form will be the unvalidated version of the survey results, so it may not directly correspond to the fully validated version of the results that are on the TRICS database following the completion of the validation process which may have involved amendments to the data that was initially supplied on the form.

Should the client also require additional CSV outputs of each survey count mode, so that they can undertake their own analyses of the results using their own calculations, these can be provided by TRICS at an additional cost of £212 + VAT. A separate purchase order would be required prior to these being sent to the client.

As the purchase order for all fees associated with the project would have already been received, TRICS then sends an invoice separately to the client or the separate organisation who is paying for the work. It is important to note that payment for work undertaken by TRICS must be made within the terms specified by TRICS Consortium Limited. If a separate organisation to the client (for example a developer) is to pay for the work, then should the payment not be made within the terms of TRICS, the client will become liable for this payment and a separate invoice will be sent to them.