The best way to gauge manufacturers’ recent changes in production, orders and inventories around the Tenth District is simple: just ask them.

Since 1994, the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City has surveyed manufacturers in the Tenth Federal Reserve District, comprised of Colorado, Kansas, northern New Mexico, western Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma and Wyoming.

Before the survey, timely information on regional manufacturing performance was sparse, even though it is a major force in the District’s economy—accounting for 12 percent of the U.S. output (GDP) and 8.7 of the District’s output and 9.2 percent of U.S. employment and 6.2 percent of District employment.

The results are a valuable source of information about the District’s manufacturing sector and provide specific variables such as prices and capital spending, for which no independent regional data 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.

Results of the survey receive widespread coverage by regional and national media, and various economic websites.

Staff from the Oklahoma City Branch of the Kansas City Fed oversees the process, which is outlined here.
Links to a secure online survey are emailed 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.

The Bank approximately receives 100 to 120 responses each month. Survey replies, which must be submitted online within four business days or six calendar days, are tallied by a website application developed by the Bank’s Center for the Advancement of Data and Research in Economics.

Kansas City Fed staff then creates 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.

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 Kansas City Fed is one of just five Federal Reserve Banks (Philadelphia, New York, Richmond and Dallas) that conducts manufacturing surveys.

The first manufacturing survey conducted entirely online was in July 2001. Years prior, surveys were conducted by mail.

On the last Thursday of the month, the report is distributed. Results are published and analyzed by regional and national media, and various economic websites. The Bank uses the data in preparation for the pre-Federal Open Market Committee meetings. Economists use the results for research. The accumulated results also help identify the effectiveness of the survey. To see results visit www.KansasCityFed.org/research/indicatorsdata/mfg.

COMMENTS/QUESTIONS are welcome and should be sent to teneditors@kc.frb.org.