

# Evaluation Method: Interview

## HOW-TO-GUIDE

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### Purpose:

- To provide community members and experts with an opportunity to feel listened to and heard.
- To gather data and information from individuals who know firsthand about community issues.

### Interview's 7 Steps:

#### 1. Make a list of what you want to know.

*What kind of information do you want to know?*

Are you looking for evidence of a need in the community? Or are you looking for evidence that your efforts have been successful? In either case, a list of what you want to know will help you be intentional about what types of questions you ask to be sure you are getting responses that are helpful.

#### 2. Prepare interview questions.

*What questions will help you gather the information you want to know?*

Plan the questions you want to ask and some probing questions to dig deeper into people's responses. Open-ended questions (unlike yes or no questions) encourage people to think about their answer and share more information. Open-ended questions starting with "How..." or "What..." are most effective. Write your questions in an interview guide, allowing space after each question for notes.

#### 3. Decide who to interview.

*Who are the experts? Who has the firsthand knowledge you are looking for?*

We usually think of experts as having more training or education. However, in communities, people with firsthand knowledge of an issue have a special kind of expertise. Consider someone who uses the food pantry. They have a unique perspective about the pantry versus an employee at social services. Who has the kind of knowledge you want? Consider interviewing people from a variety of perspectives.

#### 4. Prepare for interviews.

- Decide when to conduct interviews and schedule time with people if needed.
- Prepare yourself to listen. Interviews are really a one-sided conversation. Plan to ask questions and then to really listen to what people say.
- Practice interviewing people so you feel more comfortable when you sit down with interviewees.

#### 5. Conduct interviews.

Take written notes and record the interviews, with permission from the interviewees. See additional details about How to Record Interviews on page 2 of this resource.

#### 6. Analyze and summarize interview data.

Transcribe important quotes and other elements from the recording. Then organize your notes and the transcription into an outline format and highlight words or phrases that stand out to you. Summarize the notes from each question into something short and clear.

#### 7. (Optional) Plan next steps and/or tell the story.

*What story do you want to share? What action(s) might you take as a result of what you learned?*

Put together the most important interview responses into a story. Consider what action you might want to take based on the story you have told.

## How to Record Interviews

- Smartphone: If you have a smartphone, it most likely has an audio recorder already built into it. If the app has an interview mode, test it out before the interview to see where to place it to have the best audio quality.
- Take a photo with the person you interviewed. When presenting your final project, it might be effective to show pictures of everyone you interviewed to increase your credibility and believability.

## General Interview Tips

- Arrive at least 15 minutes before your interview.
- Before starting the interview, always ask permission for the interview to be on the record and for you to be allowed to use their name. If an interviewee asks to be off the record or for their name not to be used, any findings or interviewee information gathered cannot be used.
- Take notes as well as record the interview.
- Ask open-ended questions. Allow room for spontaneous questions and answers.
- Especially with facts and figures, ask the person you are interviewing where they got that information from.
- Keep interviews under one hour. Taking less time is fine if you get the information you need.

## Suggested Adaptation:

Youth might also consider inviting local experts in as speakers to understand the content of the issue and to learn about the local context. They can use some of the same questioning techniques with a speaker as in an interview setting.

## Additional Resources:

For more detailed information, visit the [Youth Leading Community Change Evaluation Toolkit](#) and read pages 64-66.



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