

Sample Key Informant Interview Protocol

Much of the following protocol comes directly from Donaldson and Franck's "Needs Assessment Guidebook for Extension Professionals" (2016).

When conducting key informant interviews, preparation is extremely important because interviews can be challenging if you ask about highly personal topics. Interviews mainly provide qualitative data (such as perceptions, values, opinions, and information from personal observation) in contrast to quantitative data (quantities, amounts, percentages, proportions, facts, etc.) (Witkin & Altschuld, 1995).

Although the list of sample questions below can be useful for your interviews, you'll want to review and customize them before starting your interviews. When you contact the interviewee to invite them to participate in an interview, it's important to know how long the interview will last. Practicing questions in advance and thinking through possible answers can help you gain a sense of how long the interview will take. A useful step is to interview coworkers to help determine the approximate length of the interview, to help build confidence in the questions and the interview process, and to identify any questions that are unclear. To be considerate of people's time and attention spans, ideally the interview should not last more than 30 minutes. The following procedure can help you to stay on task and on time:

1. If recording, test equipment the day before the interview. Purchase any needed supplies (i.e., batteries for the recorder).
2. Engage in some small talk to put the interviewee at ease.
3. Inform the interviewee that the purpose of the interview is for CSU's OEE to collect information for our comprehensive, statewide community needs assessment. Information provided by the interviewee will be used to understand important issues facing local communities in order to help ensure that local and statewide OEE resources align with community priorities.
4. Assure the interviewee that the interview is confidential.
5. If recording, get the interviewee's verbal permission to before recording.
6. Ask if the interviewee is ready for you to begin recording.
7. Conduct the interview, being sure to record responses verbally or in written form.
8. If you do not understand an answer, be honest and ask the interviewee to clarify for you.
9. Resist the temptation to offer advice about how to answer (Creswell, 1998).
10. Watch the time and do not go over time.
11. Thank the interviewee for participating.
12. Return to the office to review notes and reflect on the interview. Reflecting is important because it can provide a context for the interview. What was the mood of the person being interviewed? Were they engaged or distracted? Did they have an agenda separate from the topic of interest? What were the key findings from the interview?
13. If recorded, listen back to the recording and takes notes as needed.

Sample Questions and Interview Form

Date:

Participant name:

- Make the interviewee feel comfortable by starting with some small talk.
 - Provide a high-level background about CSUE, including our mission to “empower Coloradans to address important and emerging community issues using dynamic, science-based educational resources”.
 - Explain that the purpose of the interview is to understand your perspective on the issue or population you’ve chosen them to represent so that CSUE can more clearly understand specific community needs.
1. I would like to learn more about your experience working on X issue or in the Y (demographic such as Latinx) community. Can you provide me a little personal background?
 2. Based on this experience, can you help me understand more about the particular issue (or issues facing this demographic) in our community?
 3. Can you think of any contributing factors associated with this issue (such as mental health being one possible contributing factor to homelessness)?
 4. Are you aware of others who are working to address this issue/these issues, including potential partners for CSUE?
 5. (If you are in need of more informants, consider asking for a good contact at this point.)
 6. Knowing what you do about CSUE, can you suggest any kinds of strategies for us to develop and/or deliver educational resources to address this issue/these issues? Please feel free to suggest bold opportunities for how we might work in new ways.
 7. If we were to develop and/or deliver these educational resources, what kinds of barriers come to mind about how people may find and access them?

When developing your own custom questions to ask, consider the following:

- Start with prompts, such as “Describe for me...”, “Tell me about a time when...”, “Can you give me an example of...”, and “Tell me about a situation that...” (Gupta, 1999).
- If asking about behaviors, more accurate information is obtained when you ask about a specific time period rather than asking people what they “usually” do.
- The time period you select should correspond to the topic. For example, the last 12 months would apply to home ownership or pregnancy, whereas the last 24 hours would apply to eating dairy products.