

## Interviews

Interviews are usually conducted one-on-one (either face-to-face or by telephone) to obtain detailed information from participants, stakeholders and partners about their views on a project/program. This information is then used as part of planning and/or evaluating a project/program [99].

Interviews can be:

- › unstructured, by holding a normal conversation with follow-up questions at the time of the interview [99]
- › semi-structured, by using a set of standardised questions [99]
- › in-depth, by using only a topic or discussion guide [99].

## How to arrange and conduct interviews

### Select a coordinator

An interview coordinator can be responsible for:

- › pre-arranging the time and place for an interview [22, 99] (consider whether the interviewee will be more comfortable if in a familiar setting, which may require travel time)
- › sending confirmation letters and, if desired, the interview questions beforehand
- › booking interview rooms [22]
- › making reminder telephone calls the day before the interview
- › making thank you telephone calls after the interview
- › sending thank you letters with a copy of the overall interview results.

## Develop interview questions or a discussion guide

Interview questions gather an in-depth response and still allow other issues to be raised by the participant [99]. Interview questions:

- › require more than a yes or no response [99]
- › are open-ended questions that help to generate a lot of information [99]
- › should not lead a response by implying the answer in the question [99]
- › generally ask the who, what and how of an issue.

### Sample interview questions:

- › Who in your organisation would be interested in being involved with the project/program?
- › How do you think your organisation will use the project/program?
- › What parts of the project/program will be the most use to your organisation?
- › Who in your organisation has used the project/program?
- › How do you feel about the project/program?
- › What do you think are the effective parts/strongest points of the project/program?

An interview discussion guide is generally used by a more experienced interviewer, and will only outline the main issues to be discussed [99]. It will also include probes or points to prompt for more information if issues are still unanswered [99].

**Interview questions need to be developed and tested to ensure they are:**

- › clear and simple
- › easy to understand
- › gather the information required [101].

**For more information on developing and testing interview questions, visit:**

- › Surveys/questionnaires (Step 6) [Link to Phase 1 material: Surveys/ questionnaires](#)

## Select the interviewer

Decide who will conduct the interviews by considering:

- › what impact the interviewer will have on the answers of participants [22]
- › the confidentiality of the questions and whether you or someone in your organisation can do the interviews [22]
- › whether any sensitive questions are being asked (eg. gender based or cultural issues) and if these will be answered honestly with the person selected to conduct the interviews [101]
- › whether participants will speak more freely if an external person is used (if so, you will probably need to pay someone to do the interviews) [22].

## Set up an interview procedure

Design and follow an interview procedure to ensure all participants are being given and asked the same information, especially when there is more than one interviewer. This will standardise the way the interview is conducted [101]. The procedure could also contain the standard introduction that interviewers say to participants and instructions on how to answer participants' questions [101].

## At the start of an interview

While keeping the introduction short and easy to understand, address the following points at the start of an interview:

- › the importance and purpose of the survey and the credibility of the organisation involved [101]
- › the importance of the respondent's participation [101]
- › the time it will take to complete the interview [101]
- › your assurance that their information is confidential (as appropriate)
- › your appreciation for their valuable time and effort [101]
- › a contact person's name and details for further enquiries
- › an offer for feedback of results [101]
- › an explanation as to why they were selected to participate [101].

In face-to-face interviews, make eye contact and smile [101]. In telephone interviews, make sure your voice sounds happy and friendly.

## During an interview

### When conducting the interview:

- › run through your questions with the participants [22]
- › be a good listener, and hear what the participants are saying (ie. not what you want to hear)
- › allow participants time to think about the question and their responses
- › ask the questions in the same way
- › take notes during the interview, especially the key points a person is making
- › thank participants for their time and involvement.

If recording the interview (by either video or tape), seek written consent first and remember to bring extra batteries and tapes.

## After an interview

### After the interview:

- › read your notes to make sure they make sense and nothing important has been missed
- › send a thank you letter and provide feedback of overall results to interested participants.

You will also need to analyse the information that has been collected and interpret the results. Writing a report allows you to share the information with the participants and others.

**For more information on analysing the information and interpreting the results, visit:**

- › Surveys/questionnaires (Step 8) [Link to Phase 1 material: Surveys/ questionnaires](#)

## References

1. **Queensland Health** – Healthy Schools website, Health Promoting Schools Toolbox Booklet 6 – How to gather information. Accessed 2 March 2007.  
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