

# METHOD INTERVIEWS




**Area of CoP Activity:** Building Relationships  
Learning and Developing Practice

**CoP Lifecycle Phase:** Inquire

**CoP Success Factor:** Sharing Best Practice  
Knowledge Production and Access to Knowledge  
Learning

**EIGE Step:** Step 2: Analysing and assessing the state-of-play in the institution  
Step 5: Monitoring progress and Evaluating a GEP

**Group Size:** 5-8 key informants

**Difficulty Level:** 

**Time Needed:** 

**Facilitator Preparation:** 

**Participant Preparation:** 

**Description:** One of the best ways to understand how stakeholders make sense of current situations or topics is by **talking directly with them** and asking about their specific experiences. The stakeholders’ knowledge is an important prerequisite for developing concrete ideas for new initiatives or improvements.

**More Information:** Gillham, B. 2005. Research Interviewing: The Range of Techniques

## INTERVIEWS

### Short Description

One of the best ways to understand how stakeholders make sense of current situations or topics is by talking directly with them and asking about their specific experiences. The stakeholders' knowledge is an important prerequisite for developing concrete ideas for new initiatives or improvements.

### When to use this method?

An interview can be used in several stages of your plan implementation: during start-up to zoom in on the project's focus, in the inquire phase to increase your knowledge about the stakeholders' experience and understanding of a given situation, and later to test a response to the developed concepts, ideas and prototypes.<sup>1</sup>

### How to use this method?

#### A: Brief explanation

The most effective interview approach outside of a research project situation is most probably a semi-structured interview, which allows the investigator to gently guide the flow of the dialogue, and at the same time allow the participants to provide their own perspective and even digress to explore the unexpected.

#### B: Detailed Step-by-step guide

- Select 5-8 people from your target audience. To get a full understanding of the field you are studying, it is important that you interview people with different experiences. For example, it may be how legislation is experienced differently depending on the size of the institutions affected by it.
- Define the informed consent procedures of the interviews and prepare the templates of informed consent and information sheets that will be sent to interviewees at the moment of contacting them.
- Get in touch with people from your target audience. Briefly tell them about the background of the project, the duration of the interview, any preparation that might be necessary and how the content will be used.
- Prepare for your interviews by formulating a wide variety of questions that comprehensively cover the stakeholder's experience and attitude to a given situation or subject. Ask yourself: "What do I want to know about the stakeholder?" And "What do I want to know about the stakeholder's first-hand experience of the current situation or subject?"
- The interview should take place in the environment the interview is about, for example, if you are inquiring about something related to the person's work or institution, then the interview should take place there. You can ask the interviewee to give you a tour of the workplace, if it is relevant for the project.
- During the interview, introduce yourself, your role and explain why the stakeholder's input is important to the plan or project. Collect the signed informed consent form and information sheet that explains the objectives of the interview and how personal data will be collected, stored, protected and deleted. Ask if you can record the conversation and take pictures for internal use.
- Ask open-ended and specific questions so you do not assume too much about the stakeholder's answers. Start with the questions: who, what, where, how and why, so you do not end up with a yes or no answer. Encourage the interviewee to elaborate and provide examples to the responses.
- Save any questions about the stakeholder's opinions you may have for the end of the interview.
- Select key insights, observations and quotes. Use quotes from the interview to present the discovered insights for your colleagues or at a workshop.

### Additional ideas / information

- Make sure that all personal data collection and processing regarding the activity is carried out according to the EU, national and institutional legislation.
- This activity can be successfully adapted online. Recording the session can be done with your mobile phone, or the integral option available via the online communication tool you are connecting through (e.g. Zoom). As with the face-to-face version, you need to get approval for recording.

ADAPTABLE  
ONLINE

<sup>1</sup> Description and template adapted from [www.mind-lab.dk](http://www.mind-lab.dk)



**TIPS FOR INTERVIEWING:**

- Choose environment in which your informant works or practices and where they feel at relaxed. This helps the interviewee to imagine and address specific situations related to practice.
- Record the interview on your phone. This will help you focus on listening and being present. BUT, remember to always ask permission to record!
- Set the scene. Make sure your interviewee can feel at ease. Break the ice before plunging into your questioning mode.
- Take the ownership for the situation. You are the "host"!
- Begin with "wh\*" and "how" questions:
- "Hows" calls for descriptions, context and stories
- "Wh\*s" lead to reflections and feelings
- Don't overcomplicate questions. Simplicity usually results in better answers.

**GENERAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**FINDINGS:**

**INTERVIEWEE PROFILE:**

NAME:

ROLE:

ORGANISATION:

RELATION TO THE PROJECT:

**SPECIFIC QUESTIONS:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

## REFERENCES

Gillham, Bill. 2005. *Research Interviewing: the Range of Techniques*. McGraw-Hill Education Open University Press.