

Text S3: Semi-structured interview questions for the local coordinators

Overview

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all main local coordinators involved in participant recruitment for the MyGardenOfTrees citizen science project. This included coordinators responsible for single countries as well as those who worked across multiple national contexts.

Interview Objectives

The interviews were designed around three core objectives:

1. **Document recruitment strategies:** Capture the diverse approaches used by coordinators to engage potential participants across different countries and forestry sectors
2. **Identify barriers and facilitators:** Systematically catalog factors that hindered or facilitated successful recruitment in different contexts

Interview Format

- **Type:** Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions
- **Duration:** Approximately 45-60 minutes per interview
- **Mode:** Conducted via video conference and audio-recorded with participant consent
- **Language:** English

Interview Conduct

- Interviews followed the structured question guide while allowing for natural conversation flow
- Follow-up questions were used to clarify responses and explore emerging themes
- Coordinators were encouraged to provide specific examples and case studies
- Sensitive topics (e.g., personal challenges, institutional conflicts) were handled with appropriate discretion

Question Framework

The interview guide consisted of 25 core questions organized into six thematic areas:

| Question | Qualitative Theme |
|---|---|
| 1. When did you join the project? | Which trials did they help with. |
| 2. How were you contacted? From whom? | Coordinators recruitment Network base |
| 3. Why did you decide to join? | Network base Level of commitment |
| 4. What did you think about the initial target of 500 participants? | Trust in the project and in the process; Level of commitment |
| 5. What did you start with? Did we provide you with | General communication strategy |

| | |
|---|---|
| contacts? Did you have any communication material already available? | |
| 6. What was your initial recruiting strategy? Who did you target and through which channels? | General communication strategy |
| 7. What was the communication material did you use the most? | General communication strategy |
| 8. What were the first challenges and how did you adapt your strategy based on the challenge? | Barriers to recruitment |
| 9. What was the biggest challenge you encountered? | Barriers to recruitment |
| 10. What was the strategy or event which resulted in the highest number of participants? | Enabler |
| 11. Were you responsible for other countries? If yes, go through the same questions as above. | General communication strategy |
| 12. Think about a country where you tried to get participants, but you could not get any. What do you think were the main barriers? | Barrier to participation |
| 13. Did all participants from 2021-2023 re-registered for the new trials? If not, why? | Relationship between experiment success and participants engagement |
| 14. What did you miss which would have helped you significantly with the recruitment? | Possible future enablers |
| 15. What were the main reasons for participants not joining? | Barrier to participation |
| 16. What was the most common negative feedback from registered participants? | Barrier to participation |
| 17. What was the most common negative feedback from registered participants? | Possible barrier to monitoring/long term engagement to the project |
| 18. What was the most common positive feedback from registered participants? | Enabler |
| 19. Do you think your gender or ethnic origin had an impact on recruiting? | Enabler/barrier |
| 20. Do you think some of your character traits/personality affected the recruitment in some way? | Enabler/barrier |
| 21. What is your level of confidence with the scientific background of MGOT? Did it affect the recruiting process? | Enabler/barrier |
| 22. Can you think of an embarrassing moment you experienced during the recruiting process? | - |
| 23. What was the attitude toward the project in the public vs the private sectors? | Enabler/barrier |
| 24. Bottom-up vs top down recruitment. Which type did you use more, which one was more successful? | General communication strategy |
| 25. Overall, do you feel satisfied with your recruiting efforts? If you would start from scratch again, what would you change? | Possible future enablers |