**Qualitative Interview Discussion Guide Template**

Updated: May 2024

***This is a template for a qualitative interview discussion guide - the***

***italicized text is intended to provide additional context and examples.***

**OBJECTIVE**

*Provide a brief summary of the context of the project:*

* *Who are the key stakeholders?*
* *What is the goal of the marketing campaign?*
* *How will the research insights be used for the marketing campaign?*

**INTRODUCTION**

*During the first few minutes of the conversation, take the time to thank the participant for their time, facilitate introductions, and provide the participant with an overview of what to expect. Be sure to ask for the participant’s consent to record the conversation, and also provide them with details around how their data will be used and protected. Lastly, inform the participant that their decision to participate in the research is completely voluntary, and they can take a break or withdraw from the research at any time.*

1. ***Introductions and help the participant feel comfortable:*** *Hello, my name is XXX and I work for XXX. How are you doing today? Thank you so much for taking the time to speak with myself and my team today. I have my colleagues X,Y,Z on the call with me as well. I’ll be facilitating the conversation but they may jump in with a question or two at the end. I want to highlight that today’s conversation will be very informal, and we’re just hoping to hear your stories and your honest feedback. We hope to give you the time and space today to share your stories and thoughts with us without any judgement, so please be as candid as possible, and don’t worry about offending anyone.*
2. ***Provide the participant with some context on the project, for example:*** *I’ll start by giving you a bit of background on our research.* ***[FOR EXAMPLE] The State has a new initiative to help residents receive education, training and support to obtain jobs that pay higher wages and offer opportunity for further advancement. We’re looking to hear from residents—their stories and about their experiences finding work in New Jersey.***
3. ***Explain to the participant how the insights will be used:*** *We will be using the insights we learn from interviews like yours to* ***[FOR EXAMPLE] put together a marketing campaign that creates awareness of this new program and the benefits it provides to residents like you.***
4. ***Obtain consent to record, and explain how their data will be protected:*** *If it is okay with you, we would like to record the session for note-taking purposes. The recording won’t be shared with anyone and will be kept strictly confidential. All of your responses will be anonymized and your name won’t be used or shared with anyone outside of the research team. Do we have your permission to record this session?*
5. *Do you have any questions for me before we get started?*
6. ***Emphasize the voluntary nature of their participation:*** *If at any point you have any questions for me, let me know. Also, if at any point you’d like to take a break or withdraw from this research, that’s completely fine as well.*
7. *[Add additional questions as needed]*

**INFORMATION COLLECTION**

**Start by asking the participant to confirm certain details**

**For example:**

1. How did you hear about this interview opportunity? *(This question helps the researcher ensure that the participant was indeed contacted by the research team to be a part of the research.)*
2. [Add additional questions as needed]

**WARM UP**

*Include a fun question that is related to the interview topic. This is a good way to get the participant to open up, and to keep things light. This helps build rapport with the participant and make them feel welcome and comfortable.*

*For example, for an interview focused around people’s experiences with looking for a job, a fun question might be something like:*

1. *As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?*
2. *[Add additional questions as needed]*

**MAIN DISCUSSION**

*Prompt around underlying motivations (“why”) and emotions (“how did you feel”) related to the project focus. Start with the broader questions and then narrow in towards the focus of the interview. For example, let’s say we are conducting an interview to learn about unemployed people’s experiences with looking for a job.*

***An example flow of questions would be:***

***Start with questions about most recent employment:***

1. *What was your last role/employment?*
2. *Did you like your job?* 
   * *PROBING QUESTION: Why/why not?*
3. *Have you always done that type of work, or what type of jobs have you had?*

***Then, move into more specific questions focused on unpacking the emotions and motivations around employment:***

1. *What does being employed mean to you?*
   * *PROBING QUESTION: How does it make you feel?*
   * *PROBING QUESTION: What do you hope to get out of a job?*
2. *Where do you see yourself in the next 5 years?*
3. *What would make you look back on your life and say “I made it”/”I’m successful”?*

***Spend the remaining the interview focusing on questions that uncover people’s experiences and emotions around unemployment:***

1. *How did your most recent role come to an end? What do you recall feeling at the time?*
2. *How long have you been unemployed for?*
3. *You said you have been unemployed for X. How would you describe your experience? How does it make you feel?*
4. *What are some of the greatest barriers or challenges you have had to deal with/ overcome?*
5. *What type of work do you ideally hope to find?*
6. *What resources do you use to help you get back into the workforce?*
   * *PROBING QUESTION: Did you take any courses/complete any certifications? Which ones?*
   * *PROBING QUESTION: How did you hear about these resources?*
   * *PROBING QUESTION: Are you familiar with the concept of networking?*
   * *PROBING QUESTION: Walk me through your last experience networking with someone.*
   * *PROBING QUESTION: What resources have helped you with networking?*
7. *How easy or difficult do you think it will be to find a job?* 
   * *PROBING QUESTION: Why?*
   * *PROBING QUESTION: What factors do you think may influence finding a job?*
   * *PROBING QUESTION: What would you change about this experience/the process?*
8. *Let’s say you were given $9,600 from the State to help you get training, certification, etc. How will this change things for you?* 
   * *PROBING QUESTION: What would this mean to you?*

**CLOSING QUESTIONS**

*We ask questions such as the following at the very end of the interview, since they often get participants to open up. This helps us uncover our audience’s motivations, what drives them, and what they’re working towards.*

1. *What gets you out of bed in the morning?*
2. *What keeps you up at night?*
3. *And if you could do anything now, what would you do? Why?*
4. *[Add additional questions as needed]*

**THANK YOU/WRAP UP**

***Thank the participant for their time, explain how they will receive compensation, and debrief on how their data will be used and protected.***

***For example:***

1. ***Thank the participant for their time:*** *Those are all of the questions we have for you today, thank you so much for taking the time to speak with us!*
2. ***Let your participant know what to expect in terms of compensation:*** *As compensation for your time, we will be emailing you a $40 visa gift card that will be delivered electronically via email within the next 10-14 days. I will shoot you an email as soon as it goes out, but please keep an eye on your spam filter in case it gets caught there.*
3. ***Highlight the voluntary nature of their participation and go over the data usage and storage details once more to debrief the participant:*** *If at any point you have any questions or concerns, or if you’d like to withdraw from this research, please let me know. And once again we want to assure you that your responses will be anonymized and will not be shared with anyone outside of the research team. Your feedback will be used only for research purposes and nothing else.*
4. *Thank you very much once again, and hope you have a great rest of your day.*
5. *[Add additional questions as needed]*