

# Interview Templates

The following interview templates are based on Brenda Dervin's "sense-making" approaches for conducting research. They are designed with the assumption that a need can be better identified and met using a **human** vs. **system** approach. Using the human approach, data is collected about users and potential users using human terms rather than library or system terms. The end result is a translation of typical library inputs and outputs into terms of human experience that more effectively speak to voters and policy makers.

Samples include both close-ended and open-ended questions.

- Close-ended questions provide a fixed list of choices; respondents choose the best possible answer. They are often clearer to understand and easier to compile.
- Open-ended questions allow respondents to be more thoughtful about their answers. They often result in richer responses, but are more difficult to compile.

Dervin breaks assessments into two categories:

**Needs** assessments – collect data to assess the needs of **both** users and potential users

*Note: When you do needs assessments to help you plan library services and collections, you need to design them based on finding out how people deal with the real-life situations they face. This is not the time to give people a publicity pitch. You must focus on how they describe their needs.*

Types of questions asked for needs assessment:

- What situations do you face that cause you to look for help?
- What helps you resolve your situations?
- What is still unresolved?
- What questions do you have?
- What kind of help do you hope to get?

➤ **Accountability** assessments – collect data to see how well **the library** meets user needs

Types of questions asked for accountability assessment:

- How much do you know about **the library**?
- Which of the things **the library** does do you like best?
- What kinds of materials did you check out the last time you were at **the library**?
- Is **the library** located close enough to your home?
- How often do you use **the library**?
- Do you want **the library** to offer more of something (e.g. books, DVDs)?
- When did you last use **the library**?



4. Now I want you to think back to the situation again. When a situation makes us stop and think about it, there may be different reasons why. We are going to look at which reasons fit your situation. Did you hope to find an answer that would help you...
  - a. Understand the situation better
  - b. Understand other people better
  - c. Plan what to do or when to do it
  - d. Get better at doing something
  - e. Accomplish something you wanted to
  - f. Get motivated to do something
  - g. Keep going with it when it seemed hard to go on
  - h. Get out of a bad situation
  - i. Calm down, ease worries
  - j. Avoid a bad situation
  - k. Take your mind off things
  - l. Feel reassured or hopeful
  - m. Feel good about yourself
  - n. Make contact with others
  - o. Feel not alone
  - p. Get happiness or pleasure
  
5. People use different ways to try to get answers to their questions. I'm going to read a list of ways. Please tell me which ones you used to find an answer to your situation.  
(Interviewer underlines the YES answers)
  - a. Your own thinking or experience
  - b. The media (TV, magazines, newspaper, etc.)
  - c. Internet search tools (Google, Yahoo, etc.)
  - d. Authorities or professionals (doctors, lawyers, etc.)
  - e. Family members
  - f. Co-workers
  - g. Friends or neighbors
  - h. Social services agencies
  - i. Businesses
  - j. Religious leaders
  - k. People in government
  - l. Libraries
  - m. Schools or colleges
  
6. If you answered yes to more than one of the ways, which was the MOST useful?  
(Interviewer notes answer)
  
7. Thinking about all the sources you used, including yourself, would you say you got a complete, a partial or no answer to your question?  
(Interviewer notes answer)

8. How much did the answer help you in the situation? Very much, quite a bit, a little, not at all (Interviewer notes answer)
9. If the person did NOT get a COMPLETE answer, Interviewer asks this question.  
What do you think prevented you from getting a complete answer so far?
  - a. The complexity and uncertainty of the situation
  - b. The time was not right to get an answer
  - c. Your own emotions or motivation stood in the way
  - d. Your lack of resources stood in the way
  - e. Someone else stood in the way – they were either unwilling, unable or unqualified
  - f. You got an answer, but it wasn't adequate or useful
10. About how long ago did the situation start?
  - a. More than 2 years ago
  - b. 1-2 years ago
  - c. 6 months to 1 year ago
  - d. 3-4 months ago
  - e. 1-3 months ago
  - f. 2-3 weeks ago
  - g. Within the last week
11. Is the situation still in process?

Interviewer introduces demographics questions by saying, “The remaining questions describe you and your household. All of your answers are confidential. The questions allow us to compile comparative data from all of those interviewed.

*Note: Here examples of demographics commonly collected; customize what you ask based on your community make-up and any specific jurisdictional interests. You don't need to ask about gender, but do include a place on your template to mark an answer based on observation.*

1. Counting yourself how many people live in your household?
2. How many years of school have you completed?
3. In which age group do you belong?
  - a. 10-14
  - b. 15-19
  - c. 20-24
  - d. 25-34
  - e. 35-44
  - f. 45-54
  - g. 55-64
  - h. 65 or older

4. Which of the following groups describes you best?
  - a. American Indian or Alaska Native
  - b. Asian
  - c. Black or African American
  - d. Hispanic or Latino
  - e. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - f. White
  
5. Which of the following categories describes your total annual household income?
  - a. Less than \$25,000
  - b. Between \$25,000 and \$34,999
  - c. Between \$35,000 and \$49,000
  - d. Between \$50,000 and \$74,999
  - e. Between \$75,000 and \$99,999
  - f. Between \$100,000 and \$150,000
  - g. More than \$150,000
  - h. Don't know/Refuse to answer

## II. Key Informant Open-ended Needs Interview Template

Interviewer explains the purpose of the interview and then introduces each of the following questions.

1. Think about situations we all encounter in our daily lives – they may happen at home, work, school or elsewhere. Please tell me about what happened when you were involved in a recent situation in which you felt you needed help to understand something, make a decision, move from one point to another or overcome a barrier. Tell me as much about the situation as possible.
2. When involved in the situation do you recall anything in particular blocking you or getting in your way?
  - a. If yes, what was it?
  - b. How did it block you?
  - c. How much did it block you?
    - i. Very much
    - ii. Quite a bit
    - iii. Just a little
3. When involved in the situation, did any questions come to mind, any things you wanted to find out or learn?
  - a. If yes, what were your questions?  
(Interviewer records responses for each question)
    - i. Did you get an answer?  
\_\_\_ no answer \_\_\_ partial answer \_\_\_ complete answer
    - ii. How did you get the answer?
    - iii. How did the answer help you?
    - iv. If you did not get a complete answer, what prevented that happening?
    - v. How did you hope the answer would help you?

4. About how long ago did the situation start?
  - a. More than 2 years ago
  - b. 1-2 years ago
  - c. 6 months to 1 year ago
  - d. 3-4 months ago
  - e. 1-3 months ago
  - f. 2-3 weeks ago
  - g. Within the last week
  
5. Is the situation still in process?

Interviewer introduces demographics questions by saying, “The remaining questions describe you and your household. All of your answers are confidential. The questions allow us to compile comparative data from all of those interviewed.

*Note: Use examples of demographics commonly collected included for I. Key Informant Close-ended Needs Interviews above and/or customize what you ask based on your community make-up and any specific jurisdictional interests. You don't need to ask about gender, but do include a place on your template to mark an answer based on observation.*

### III. Library User Close-ended Accountability Interview Template

Interviewer explains the purpose of the interview and then introduces each of the following questions.

1. When was the last time you visited or contacted the \_\_\_\_\_ library?
  
2. About how long ago did this visit or contact occur?
  - a. More than 2 years ago
  - b. 1-2 years ago
  - c. 6 months to 1 year ago
  - d. 3-5 months ago
  - e. 1-3 months ago
  - f. Within the last week
  
3. Did you
  - a. Visit the library
  - b. Call the library
  - c. Use library online services
  
4. I'm going to read some reasons people have for contacting the library. I would like to know which, if any, of the reasons apply to the last contact you had with the \_\_\_\_\_ library. You could have more than one reason or maybe none of these apply. Did you contact the library relating to
  - a. School or college class work
  - b. Your job
  - c. Your hobbies
  - d. Your leisure or free time
  - e. Finding something for your child
  - f. Accompanying someone else
  - g. Meeting people or socializing
  - h. Relaxing or passing time
  
5. I'm going to read a list of some of the different kinds of materials or services people get from libraries. I'd like to know which ones you personally got or used the last time you visited or contacted the \_\_\_\_\_ library. You can say yes to more than one of these or maybe none of these apply. When you last visited or contacted the library did you
  - a. Use or check out non-fiction books
  - b. Use or check out fiction books
  - c. Use or check out bestsellers
  - d. Use reference books/encyclopedias
  - e. Use or check out books on tape/CD
  - f. Use newspapers
  - g. Use or check out magazines
  - h. Use or check out DVDs
  - i. Use library computers

- j. Use Internet access with your computer
  - k. Attend children's programs
  - l. Attend adult programs
  - m. Use study/quiet areas
  - n. Use rooms for meetings/activities
  - o. Use copier
  - p. Get information assistance
  - q. Attend literacy session
6. Now I'm going to read a list of ways people sometimes say they are helped when they go to the library – either by the materials or services they get while at the library or by the events that happen while there. Thinking about when you last visited or contacted the \_\_\_\_\_ library did you get help to
- a. Get ideas or understandings about something
  - b. Accomplish something or decide what to do or when or how to do it
  - c. Make contact with other people by meeting them there or learning how to make contact
  - d. Get rest or relaxation or a quiet retreat
  - e. Get motivated to do something or feel good about yourself, your decision or circumstances, or calm down and ease your worries
  - f. Feel like you belonged or were not alone
  - g. Get pleasure, entertainment, or happiness

Interviewer introduces demographics questions by saying,  
 “The remaining questions describe you and your household. All of your answers are confidential. The questions allow us to compile comparative data from all of those interviewed.

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#### IV. Library User Open-ended Accountability Interview Template

Interviewer explains the purpose of the interview and then introduces each of the following questions.

1. Please tell me what led you to make your most recent contact with the library.
  
2. As you look back over that contact, did you recall anything happening that was particularly helpful or facilitating to you?  
(Interviewer records responses for each happening)
  - a. What was that?
  
  - b. How did it help you?
  
  - c. How much did it help you?  
Very much, quite a bit, a little, not at all (Interviewer notes answer)
  
3. Did anything happen that blocked you or stood in your way somehow?
  - a. What was that?
  
  - b. How did it help you?
  
  - c. How much did it help you?  
Very much, quite a bit, a little, not at all (Interviewer notes answer)
  
4. As you think back on this contact with the library, did any questions come to mind during the visit – any things you wanted to find out or learn?  
(Interviewer records responses for each question)
  - a. What were these questions?
    - i. Did you get an answer?  
\_\_\_ no answer \_\_\_ partial answer \_\_\_ complete answer
  
    - ii. How did you get the answer?
  
    - iii. How did the answer help you?

- iv. If you did not get a complete answer, what prevented that happening?
- v. How did you hope the answer would help you?

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