

## **Community Interviews**

An interview is a one-on-one conversation. It may be done in person or on the telephone. It is a way to gather a great deal of information from individual people. It is a good way to determine possible issues and concerns about a stormwater issue, possibly a new stormwater fee.

### **Why Interviews**

The goal of an interview is to get the interviewee talking, so do not ask too many questions that have YES/NO answers. If people do answer with one word answers, you may ask follow-up questions such as, "Why do you think that is?" An interview might give you information that wouldn't be learned from a survey. It can give you an idea of the "feeling" within a community, and uncover points of view that are not readily voiced elsewhere. In addition, since it is a one on one setting, the interviewee is usually more comfortable.

### **Who to interview**

The information you are seeking will help determine who you interview. You could start with the obvious people involved in a project or community and ask them who else should be interviewed. Keep good records. Ask the interviewer if you can use their name when calling the recommended people. Interviewing is one way to determine who are the stakeholders for a specific project. Once the stakeholders are identified, interviews can help you determine even more issues, and also help you determine how the stakeholders feel about certain issues.

### **How to Interview**

It is very important that the interviewee be comfortable. You may need to have interviews at their home, a local community center, coffee shop, or the library. Be very clear about the objectives of the interview. Tell the interviewees how the information will be used and documented. Provide appropriate background information so that the interviewee understands the topic enough to answer your questions. You should test the interview questions with a small number of people, first maybe your co-workers, but then with actual interviewees. Tell them you are testing the questions, trying to come up with the best possible final interview questionnaire for the public.

### **Organizing interview data**

It is important to consider how the data will be used before finalizing the interview protocol. You will need to be able to review the interview answers, compare and analyze them. Organizing interview data can be very hard to do. Yes/No answers lend themselves more easily to comparisons, but you are striving for full complete answers from your interviewees. You should develop a matrix ahead of time to be used to compare the questions. You can group questions by similar topics. It is very important to keep precise records. The original interviews should always be kept as a reference.

## **References**

International Association of Public Participation [<http://www.iap2.org>]