

Doing Research with Community Members



Part 1: Deciding on a community member to interview

There are many people in your community who know a lot about the places that are important to you and the questions that you're asking. You may have already talked to these people in earlier LEs. These people could be community elders, people who have a job that is related to your "Should We" question, or people who have hobbies related to your "Should We" question, for example. One type of research that you can do is to **interview** people to see what they know! You can learn a lot from asking questions and listening. This is a kind of **data** that will help you learn more about your "Should We" question!

Once you decide on who you want to interview or talk with, you can call them or write them an email or letter, and let them know what you're interested in talking to them about. Sometimes you might feel unsure about how to ask someone to talk to you, but you'll be surprised at how excited people are to share their knowledge with you!

In case you need some help reaching out to community members, here is an example note you could send. You can change this to reflect how you want to talk with this person (over email, on the phone, on something like Zoom, by sending a letter):

Dear [insert the name here],

My name is [put your name here] and my family is trying to explore the question [put your "Should We" question here]. You are someone who lives in our community and knows a lot about this topic! We were hoping that you would be interested in talking with us about this topic so that we can learn from you!

We think this might take about 10 minutes. Would you be interested? If so, please email me back at [put your email address here]. We are excited to talk to you and hope you are available!

Thank you,
[put your name here]

Part 2: Coming up with questions to ask

Sometimes, even though you know what you want to learn about, it's hard to come up with questions to ask. In case you need some help coming up with questions, here are some suggestions:

- How did you learn about [this topic]?
- We are asking the question: should we [put your should we question here]. What do you think is important to know about this before we try to answer this question?
- What do you think is the best way to investigate this?
- How did [this topic] come to be in our community? What is the history of [this topic] in our community?
- What resources do you think would be helpful for us to use?
- Are there other people who you think we should talk to?

Part 3: Getting ready for your interview!

Once you have your date set and your questions prepared, it's time to do the interview! Make sure you have the following materials:

1. The questions written out on a piece of paper so you don't forget them! You might even find that a table like the one below is helpful to organize yourself during the interview:

[Write question 1 here]	[Write the answer to question 1 here]
[Write question 2 here]	[Write the answer to question 2 here]
[Write question 3 here]	[Write the answer to question 3 here]
[Write question 4 here]	[Write the answer to question 4 here]

2. A pen or pencil to write down the answers. You can also ask permission to record the interview on a phone! But it's totally ok just to write down some notes!

Part 4: Getting back from your interview

You did it! Now what? Now you need to look over the answers you got and figure out what you know about your "Should We" question now that you've done the interview.

When you go to LE8 and 9, you will have a chance to bring all of your data together (from your field-based investigations, your community-based research, and your internet research) to see what you've found out and how you can decide on your next steps.