

Attachment 95003.05
Guidance for Focus Groups and Individual Interviews

This attachment provides information about the strengths and limitations of different interview types and methods. It also provides guidance for conducting individual and group interviews.

This attachment is arranged in the following five parts:

<u>Part</u>	<u>Contents</u>
1	Individual Interviews
2	Group Interviews
3	Structured Interviews
4	Unstructured Interviews
5	Sampling Guidance

Note that both individual and group interviews may be either structured or unstructured.

The first four parts are subdivided into Overview, Strengths, and Limitations subsections. Parts 1 and 2 also include a Guidance subsection. Part 5 presents considerations in selecting samples of participants for interviewing.

1. Individual Interviews

1.1 Overview

Individual interviews consist of collecting information in a face-to-face, one-on-one setting where an interviewer poses a series of questions/topics to the interviewee and records the information provided. The degree of structure in the questions/topics can vary. (See parts 3 and 4.)

1.2 Strengths

- Permits detailed exploration of an individual's values, perceptions, attitudes, and views about the organization's norms.
- Preferred method when information is more sensitive or personal and anonymity can be assured.
- Useful when additional probing on answers is required.
- Interviewer has good control over the session in terms of topics discussed and detail provided.

1.3 Limitations

- Time-consuming and resource-intensive.
- Quality of interview data strongly influenced by interviewer skills.
- Interviews with approximately 10% of the population are needed to adequately understand existing issues.
- Information from a single interviewee cannot be considered unless validated through other sources of information.

1.4 Guidance

Complete individual interviews as follows:

1.4.1. Note that the main objectives of the interview is to gain opinions on:

- the licensee's actual awareness of nuclear safety issues;
- the safety-related attitudes of management and staff;
- the degree of compliance with policies and procedures;
- the possible reasons for observed inconsistencies or contradictions between actual and expected behavior, thus gathering data on social norms, beliefs, and values relevant to safety culture.

1.4.2. Prepare an interview plan in advance of the interview, and follow that plan to conduct the interview.

1.4.3. Conduct the interview in 3 stages, as follows:

- 1) Establish a relationship of trust and cooperation with the interviewee
- 2) Gather interview data
- 3) Discuss and evaluate issues raised by the interviewee

1.4.4. After the interview, prepare a written summary of the interview results, with emphasis on the issues raised by the interviewee and insights gained by the inspector.

2. **Group Interviews**

2.1 Overview

Group interviews (i.e., focus groups) consist of collecting information in a face-to-face, group setting, where an interviewer poses a set of questions/topics to the participants and records the information provided. The degree of structure in the questions/topics can vary.

2.2 Strengths

- Group interaction can prompt/sustain discussions without a high level of interviewer input.
- Efficient - requires fewer team resources than individual interviews to obtain adequate sample size.

2.3 Limitations

- Should not be used (1) for sensitive or personal topics, (2) when there is evidence of conflict within or between work groups, or (3) when the participants have concerns about anonymity and confidentiality of responses.
- Interviewer does not have a high degree of control over the session; time may be lost on irrelevant issues. Participants will react to others' statements in addition to the interviewer's questions.
- The interview session may be dominated by the views of a minority of the participants.
- Participants may feel pressure towards consensus.
- Qualitative data may be difficult to analyze.

2.4 Guidance

2.4.1. Open each focus-group interview by introducing the inspection team members who are in the focus group. Ask the participants to introduce themselves (first names should be sufficient) and describe how long they have worked in their current organization, as well as, on site in total. Verify that the attendees are as selected by the inspectors. Question the inclusion of substitutes. If supervisory or management personnel are among the working-level attendees, ask them to leave and invite them to meet privately with the inspectors at another time or check if they are in the supervisory focus groups. Then tell participants:

- that the purpose of the focus group is to determine whether and how underlying issues contributed to the performance deficiencies which prompted this inspection;
- how interview participants were selected;
- that the focus group will consist of discussions prompted by questions;
- indicate that, to the extent possible, information obtained during the inspection will not be attributed to individual participants who are interviewed by the NRC. Remind the participants that the discussion is occurring in a group so others will hear what is said. Also, state that if an individual provides details about a specific event in which he or

she was uniquely involved, and if the NRC includes those details in their writeup of this inspection, then those details may “fingerprint” the participant who provided the details;

- all records held by the NRC of people participating will be destroyed after the focus group;
- that the NRC expects that no one will question or debrief anyone participating in the focus group about what was discussed or who attended the interview, and that any participant who is approached by someone else to discuss any aspect of the interview should notify the NRC. The inspector should explain that if the individual wishes to discuss such events in a separate private interview, the inspectors will make themselves available. Such concerns may be handled as allegations.

2.4.2. From the set of questions developed or selected for this interview (see parts 3 and 4), ask one of the questions and invite participants to respond. Ask followup questions as necessary to clarify responses and encourage discussion from other participants. Continue followup questions until the group’s response is complete and understood, and the team has obtained from the participants as many insights into safety culture components as are reasonably associated with that question. After that, ask another question.

2.4.3. Continue question-and-answer conversations as described above, for as long as participants willingly respond, or until the planned questions are all asked, subject to the following:

- Encourage all participants to speak up. Ask the same question or a variation of it to at least one other person.
- If any participant(s) does not answer any question directed to the group, direct a question or two to that participant, and encourage him or her to say what he or she thinks.
- If any participant(s) appears reluctant to answer a question or if his or her answers suggest an underlying issue or concern, make note of the question and the answers (if provided), for later follow-up. Do not persist if someone shows continued reluctance to speak.

2.4.4. Close the focus group by thanking the participants for their participation. Tell them that if:

- they have anything else to say that they did not feel comfortable saying during the session,
- they later want to clarify or revise something they said during the focus group,

- they later remember something they wish they had said during the focus group, or
- they want to talk about something that wasn't discussed during the focus group,
then they should contact the inspectors, and tell them how to do that.

2.4.5. After closing the focus group, review the focus group notes, and add relevant inspector observations and comments.

2.4.6. If any participant's response identified a concern or issue related to a safety culture component, or if any discussion suggested or otherwise indicated a concern or issue related to a safety culture component, then address that concern or issue as described in 02.12.

NOTE: Information that reflects negatively on licensee performance or safety culture, if provided in the context of the purpose of the inspection, is not an allegation. However, information that describes an inadequacy in licensee performance, which is specific and outside the scope of the inspection, may be an allegation if the NRC has not already assessed the validity of the issue. Any issues related to wrongdoing, whether provided by licensee management, licensee employees or contractors, or NRC staff, are allegations. For more specific guidance, refer to Management Directive 8.8, "Management of Allegations", or contact the appropriate regional allegation coordinator.

3. Structured Interviews

3.1 Overview

Structured interviews consist of using a pre-defined set of questions that are consistently asked of each interviewee or of subsets of interviewees. Can be done in a face-to-face or group setting.

3.2 Strengths

- Ensures similar topic areas are explored across multiple interviewees.
- Reduces differences in the process followed across interviewees and interviewers that could bias the results.
- Semi-structured interviews still allow follow-up questions and more in-depth probing of a topic.
- Ensures all key topics are addressed during the allocated interview time.
- Provides a basis for comparison between respondents.

3.3 Limitations

- If conducted as a fully structured interview, does not allow for additional follow-

up on issues that arise.

- The question sets used require careful consideration.

4 Unstructured Interviews

4.1 Overview

Unstructured interviews consist of an interviewer asking interviewees a series of questions that are developed as the interview is conducted. Can be done in a face-to-face or group setting.

4.2 Strengths

- Gives interviewer complete freedom to fully explore topics of interest that arise.
- The interviewee largely guides the interview in terms of discussion topics. This may lead to the identification of previously unknown issues.

4.3 Limitations

- Provides no basis for comparison between respondents.
- The interview process is more likely to be influenced by the style and biases of interviewer.
- Information collected may not be highly relevant to the assessment.
- No framework is available to guide the interviewer.

5 Sampling Guidance

- Develop a sampling plan that is informed by the findings of the licensee's independent safety culture assessment and review of background material.
- Include all functional groups at the site and possibly some corporate functional groups in the sampling plan.
- Select licensee and contractor participants using a stratified random distribution (as described in (1) and (2) below) of personnel from organizational rosters, focused on specific groups as appropriate. Nominally:
 - (1) For the work group(s) most closely associated with the performance deficiencies, plan to interview approximately 20% of the working- and supervisory-level personnel.
 - (2) For the major functional groups that were not closely associated with the performance deficiencies, plan to interview approximately 10% of the working- and supervisory-level personnel.

- (3) Plan to interview all heads of functional groups within the licensee's management structure, and all managers organizationally above those individuals.
- (4) Work with the licensee to select permissible substitutes for selected participants, based on unavailability due to shift work, vacation, sickness, or press of duty.