

# Interview Question Framing

Different questions provide different types of information. It's important to frame questions to get the information you want.

## **Use closed questions to understand the context**

Closed questions usually call for a specific answer and help to verify evidence and assess situations and problems that already exist.

Ask questions such as:

- What happened?
- What are the problems?
- When do problems usually occur?
- What works? What resources exist?

## **Use open-ended questions to encourage self-reflection and understand assumptions**

Open-ended questions encourage people to think more about why things occur the way they do. These questions begin a process of analysis that may lead to a discussion of how things might be different.

Ask questions such as:

- Why did this happen?
- How would you solve this problem?
- What might be done instead?

## **Use clarifying questions to further explore related issues**

Questions that ask people to describe or explain their initial responses can encourage them to share their opinions and ideas.

Ask questions such as:

- Can you say more about that?
- What makes you say that?
- How do you feel about that?

## **Use discovery questions to foster positive engagement so that people feel understood**

There are no clear questions to encourage this kind of discovery process. Instead, interviewers must listen closely to people's responses and intentionally foster positive engagement so that people feel like their ideas matter. In groups, questioners must pay attention to the dynamics between people and help ease power differentials and make connections between each contribution. This will help to build a sense of trust and affinity that might lead to new discoveries.

Ask questions that:

- Allow people to come up with their own explanations, in their own words and language
- Build on what people say. Use their words rather than reframing what they say into your own preferred terms.
- Reword questions so they empower people rather than assign blame. (Ex. Instead of asking, "Why did this go wrong?" rephrase the question to ask, "What do you think happened and why?")
- Encourage relationship building so that there are fewer risks for sharing.