

[Staple business card here]

Bay State Cities Project
Department of Political Science
Tufts University

ADMINISTRATOR INTERVIEW FORM

Date:

Interview Subject:

Title, Office

Phone #:

Email address from business card:

Interviewer

Comments on quality of interview. (If typical, you need not put anything here. But if subject is uncooperative, evasive, especially helpful, note here *briefly*.)

Names of organizations/individuals he mentioned (or suggested) that we might want to talk to. When he/she mentions the name of an organization, make sure you get the name of an individual to talk with. If a phone number is offered, include it here. If your write-up does not indicate what kind of organization each is, note that here:

[Hand business card at opening; take offered card in return]

Thank you so much for taking time from your busy day to speak with me. As I think I said to you on the phone, our research team at Tufts is conducting a project on city government. We're interviewing officials from eight different cities from eastern Massachusetts in the hopes of better understanding policymaking and urban government.

[NOTE: If respondent asks you, which are the cities, it's ok to list them: Boston, Worcester, Lynn, Somerville, Cambridge, Arlington, Brookline, and Newton]

[NOTE: If respondent asks why we picked his/her city, your response should be something like: "There were a number of factors, but the principal that guided us was to choose a set of cities that were diverse from each other in terms of the socioeconomic status of the residents]

By way of introduction let me also emphasize that this conversation is only for research purposes. In our papers and articles we'll never quote you by name or identify you in any way. Everything is confidential.

Q Intro Before we start, I just want to make sure I have you properly identified. On your card it says you're the [title]. <Or, if no card: I understand you're the [title]> Title aside, what is your job here? What are you responsible for?

Q1 To get a better idea of what goes on here I wonder if you could tell me a little about the issue you've been spending most of your time on. Over the past month or so, what have you been working on the most?

PROBE [We want to get the story here, with at least some detail, so that we can determine if there were any interest groups involved, so if their description is very brief, probe for more by picking out something in what they did say and encourage them to talk more. As with, "Interesting. I was curious, for example, that you mentioned that Jones got involved by accident, but Smith had been working all along on it. Could you elaborate?" Or some such.]

PROBE[If they don't include this information, follow-up with:] And how did that issue come on to your agenda? Where did it come from?

Q2 Thanks, that was really helpful. Looking back in time, how has the work in this office changed? Are there new procedures you use, new different kinds of demands that are placed upon you?

Q3 To round off this background, how does the size of your office today compare with its size, say, 10 years ago? In terms of FTE's, what would the comparison be?
[NOTE: We need to be able to make a comparison based on percentages. OK if the respondent says something like "12 work here today, 15 a decade ago." We can calculate the percentage from that ourselves. But if they say just "more today" or "fewer today", or "I didn't work here 10 years ago, follow up with something like: Don't worry about being exact. I just need some round numbers, a ballpark figure]

You're going to ask either 4a or 4b.

Q4 I want to return if I could to the story you told me at the outset about the [issue they just described].

EITHER:

4a-1 As you told the story, you mentioned [name of organization(s)], which were involved on this issue. Could you tell me a little bit more about their role?

4a-2 Were there other nongovernmental organizations were involved in this issue?

OR, IF NO GROUPS WERE MENTIONED

4b-1 Were there any organizations from outside of government, from the nonprofit, for-profit, or labor sectors were involved in this issue?

4b-2 [If not clear from above] Could you tell me a little about how they were involved?

ONLY ASK THIS QUESTION, Q5, IF THE ISSUE DISCUSSED IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION #1 DOES NOT HAVE TO DO WITH THE ENVIRONMENT. (WE'RE DEFINING THE ENVIRONMENT BROADLY HERE, SO IF THE ISSUE IN Q #1 SEEMS REMOTELY CONNECTED TO THE ENVIRONMENT, DON'T ASK THIS QUESTION.

ONLY ASK OF RELEVANT AGENCIES. [IF NOT A RELEVANT AGENCY SKIP AND GO TO Q6.]

Q5 One area we've been asking about is the environment as such issues are often controversial in city government. Is there an issue related to the environment that you've been involved with recently?

[If they say yes but don't proceed to tell you much, probe, something like:] That's interesting, what you said about [X, Y or Z]. Tell me a little more about that:

You're going to ask either 5a or 5b

5a-1. As you told the story, you mentioned [name of organization(s)], which were involved on this issue. Could you tell me a little bit more about their role?

5a-2. Were there other nongovernmental organizations were involved in this issue?

OR, IF NO GROUPS WERE MENTIONED IN 5

5b-1. Were there any organizations from outside of government that were involved in this issue?

5b-2 [If not clear from above] Could you tell me a little about how they were involved?

Q6 When an administrator like yourself is dealing with outside organizations, he/she is sometimes just trying to be responsive to requests, making sure government is open to its constituents. Other times, administrators work with outside organizations in an attempt to collaborate with them, or try to build a coalition with them. For the organizations you just mentioned, which fall into the collaborative/partner category and which are organizations that you conscientiously respond to but don't try to partner with?

PROBE: [If not clear from their answers, for those groups that fall into the collaborative category] And what makes these groups valuable to you? What is that they have to offer?

Q7 Are there any organizations that you've found frustrating to work with? Organizations that try to block what you want, or they somehow work at cross-purposes to your efforts?

PROBE [If not clear from their answers] what is it that gives these groups what influence they have?

Q8 Does your agency have any advisory committees made up of people from the community, or representatives of local organizations?
If yes, ask, “Would it possible to get a membership list, or is it on the city’s web site?”

Q9 Let me ask a different sort of question, but again about outside organizations. One thing that’s not well understood by political scientists is the role of nongovernmental organizations in local elections. Most political science research is on state or national elections. Since you’re an administrator and don’t have to stand for election, you might be a good observer, or at least a neutral one, in discussing this. Do any of these outside organizations provide any kind of assistance, directly or indirectly, to city council [selectman, alderman] candidates or candidates for mayor?
PROBE [For the organization listed as most important, or listed first if they’re treated equally, probe for what, specifically, did they do in the last election]

Q-LAST We've covered a lot of ground. Is there something I should be asking. If you were sitting in my seat, what would you be asking?

Q-Help That just about wraps things up. If I could ask for your help on one thing, though. As we spoke you mentioned some organizations that you interacted with. We're going to follow up and try to do brief phone interviews with one representative of each group we hear about. [Here distinguish between organizations where he/she mentioned a person, and those that he/she didn't.] Could you give me the name of someone at the [organizations where he/she didn't give you a name].

Let me make sure I have the names right for [list names mentioned earlier; probe if its not clear how you get a hold of them; nonprofits might be run out of someone's home. Businesses, business associations, and unions should be easy to find.]

That's it. Thanks so much. [**Close your folder and put away your pen in a very obvious fashion, indicating that you really are done. Then:**] Maybe I should ask if there's something I should have been asking you?

[**Do not take notes, leave notebook closed even if they talk about something directly relevant**]

[**Linger at door if comfortable; small talk might be revealing at this point**]

[**When you finally do leave, *immediately* write up any comments they made after your notebook was closed; *immediately* write up all other comments using the notes you took as a guide.**]