

Needs Assessment Interview Guide

For any work like this, have an idea what you are aiming for before you begin. Write a short introductory statement so you remember to say it as you begin each interview. You can consider recording your interviews, if your participants allow. Transcriptions take 4 to 5 hours to do, per hour of interview. But you may find the audio handy to refer to if you later question something you wrote in your notes.

Demographic Information

What is your profession?

What is your position (job title)?

Which sector most closely matches your employment field/affiliation?

For many, you are seeking categories like these Emergency Support Functions: Emergency Management, Transportation, Energy, Public Safety, Agriculture and Natural Resources, Public Health, Construction, Public Works (e.g. see <http://www.fema.gov/pdf/emergency/nrf/nrf-esf-intro.pdf> for a complete list of Emergency Support Functions (ESFs) as defined by FEMA)

What is the type of jurisdictional domain you serve in?

You are seeking categories like these: National, Regional, State, County, City, Tribal, Private, Other

OR: What is your industry?

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

Categories like these: Less than High School, High School/GED, Associates Degree/Technical School, Bachelors Degree, Masters Degree, Doctorate, Other

How long have you been in your profession?

How long have you utilized weather information for your profession?

Have you ever received SKYWARN Spotter or other weather education?

Ask them to briefly describe it.

Significant Events

OPTIONAL SECTION

Instructions: If you already know what kind of event you wish to focus on, remove this section. This section will help you learn what is most important to them.

What are your most critical non-weather, but weather-affected events?

Tip: Use follow-up prompts to elicit more from them, such as "Anything else?" followed by a pause to let them think.

What are your most critical weather events?

Use follow-up prompts such as "What else?" or "Anything else?" and pause to let them think.

What events or weather types are people in your jurisdiction most vulnerable to?

What weather events do you feel most prepared for?

For example, events where you have good plans, and typically receive good information at the time you need it.

Use follow-up prompts such as "Anything else?" and pause to let them think.

What weather events are you least prepared for?

Use follow-up prompts such as "Anything else?" and pause to let them think.

Instructions: From their answers to these questions, decide what types of events to focus on for your questions today. Consider holding your interview to an hour or less to avoid exhaustion, as well as respecting their time.

Event types could include the following: Winter storms, Severe Weather, Flooding

Information Usage

If you are visiting them in their office, ask them to show you what information they look at.

Daily (e.g., Ongoing Monitoring, Nothing Going On)

Do you monitor weather on a daily basis?

What do you look at?

Before an Event

What weather information do you seek before (event)?

How do you access that information?

How long before (event) are you looking for that information?

What types of decisions do you need to make before (event)?

At what points before (event) do you have to make those decisions?

Describe the timeframe for each.

What actions do you need to take before (event) ?

What are the conditions thresholds at which you decide to act?

How frequent are your decisions and actions before (event) ?

During an Event

What weather information do you use during (event) ?

How do you access that information?

At what points during (event) do you have to make decisions?

What types of decisions do you need to make during (event) ?

What triggers the need to make those decisions?

Describe the timeframe for each.

What actions do you need to take during (event) ?

What are the conditions thresholds for those actions?

What prevents you from seeing information you need during (event) ?

After an Event

What weather information do you use after (event) has happened?

How do you access that information?

At what points after (event) do you have to make decisions?

What types of decisions do you need to make after (event) ?

What triggers the need to make those decisions?

Describe the timeframe for each.

What actions do you need to take after (event) ?

What are your conditions thresholds for those actions?

What prevents you from seeing information you need after (event) ?

Communication

How do you usually receive weather information?

How does that change during events?

Do you have mobile access/capability to view graphical weather information?

How do you communicate weather information and warnings with others in your jurisdiction?

Insert any type of communication format your office is (is considering) using.
Do you use __**(social media)**__ in your job?

If so, which types?

How do you use it?

NWS Focused Information Usage

Important — ask the open-ended questions above before asking about NWS information in particular.

How often do you visit NWS web pages?

What information do you look at most?

Are you able to find the NWS products that you need?

How easy is it to use the NWS products?

Product Usability

OPTIONAL SECTION

Ask the following set of questions for each product you want information for. Be sure to print out characteristic samples of each product so that you are certain they are answering about the product you mean. Show the printouts one by one as you go through the questions.

Products you might ask about:

Print out a characteristic sample of each product.

Short Term Forecast
Severe Weather Statement
Hazardous Weather Outlook
Forecast Discussion
Gridded Forecast
Special Weather Statement
Convective Outlooks
Mesoscale Discussion
Severe Weather Watches
Local Storm Reports

Services ...will vary by what your office offers, such as:

Weather Briefings
Graphical Forecasts

Print out (or have ready to show, if video-type format) a characteristic sample of each product.

Do you ever look at this product? (run through questions for each product)

What causes you to look at it?

How do you use it?

What do you like about it?

What do you dislike about it?

Repeat above questions with each product.

What products do you use most?

Do not restrict their answer to the products you used in the previous questions. The following questions assume they will mention new products you did not already show.

How do you use them?

What do you like about them?

What do you dislike about them?

If you could request NWS information in a different format, what would it be?

Tip: You might get answers like text only, graphics only, text with graphics, GIS

What further information do you need — or think should be available — through the NWS?

What aspects of weather would you like to learn more about? How would that help you do your job?

Experimental Product Feedback

OPTIONAL SECTION

If you have experimental products, or product ideas, create samples and a scenario in which you would have created that product to anchor them into a scenario under which they might use the information.

Show the product, and describe the scenario in which you would create it.

How would this type of product help with your decisions and actions?

When would you need it in order for it to be most effective?