

Protocol for Microbusiness Innovation Science and Technology Survey Cognitive Interviews

Company Name:

City and State:

Date:

Time:

Respondent:

Position:

Interviewer:

Overview

During the cognitive interview we anticipate administering the questionnaire in two different ways. We will alternate between both methods depending on the interviewer and the issues that need to be addressed.

- 1) Retrospective Protocol: Ask respondent to complete the full questionnaire without interruptions. Then, review respondent's answers as appropriate, where the respondent indicated they had questions or concerns.
- 2) Concurrent Protocol: Review the questionnaire page by page with the respondent. Ask about specific questions as appropriate. The probes for the specific questions are included in this document.

Introduction for Retrospective Protocol:

The National Science Foundation is planning a new survey of small companies sometime in the next twelve to eighteen months.

The survey will go to companies with fewer than five employees and ask about their R&D and Innovation related activities, if any.

We will ask you to complete all the questions so that we can get a timing of how long it takes to fill it out.

If there is anything on the questionnaire that you'd like to discuss, please mark the question with an "X" so that we can discuss it after you have completed the survey. This will help us understand what works and doesn't work before we send the questionnaire to a larger number of companies.

Introduction for Concurrent Protocol:

The National Science Foundation is planning a new survey of small companies sometime in the next twelve to eighteen months.

The survey will go to companies with fewer than five employees and ask about their R&D and Innovation related activities, if any.

We'd like to go through the questionnaire with you page by page so that you can see the questions we are asking. For some of the questions, we will ask you for more reactions.

This will help us understand what works and doesn't work before we send the questionnaire to a larger number of companies.

Probes for Retrospective Debriefing; questions with an "X":

For Question XX, you checked [respondent's answer] could you please tell me how you came up with that answer?

Probes for Specific Questions for Concurrent Protocol:

Question 4: Does the number of contractors your business hires fluctuate during the year?

Question 6: What type(s) of facility did you use for the first five years of your company?
-- How often did your company move, if at all?

Question 7: If an academic institution had an ownership stake in your company, was it a state institution or a private institution?

Question 8: As you are look at this question, what does the phrase, "tried to get funding" mean to you?

-- And, what does the phrase, "tried to get funding" mean to you?

-- Are there other sources of funding that we should include?

Question 11: What does the definition of machinery or equipment add to this question?

-- How do these answer categories work for your company?

Questions 13 and 14: With these questions we are trying to understand your expectations for your company over the next year. What other types of things should we ask about?

Question 16: How easy or difficult is it to break this down into percentages?

Question 17: Question 15 is about goods and services, question 16 is about revenue, and question 17 is about net sales and operating revenues – are we asking about too many things?

Question 18: How would you use these examples?

Question 24: In your own words, how can services be improved?

--What categories should we be using for this question?

Question 30: Do these categories help you answer the question or do they make it harder to answer the question?

Question 37: Did you seek any additional patent protection in foreign countries or from the international patent system for patents filed in 2009 or previously?

Note to interviewer: The probes on questions 44, 45, 47, 51, 52, 54, and 57 are nearly identical. It is important to discuss in depth the categories presented, but no necessary to do it on every question. Is it possible that the categories work on some questions, but not others?

Question 44: What are your reactions to these categories? Are there too many categories? Do they help you to answer the question?

Question 45: What are your reactions to these categories? Are there too many categories? Do they help you to answer the question? Is the reference to Question 11 too far back in the questionnaire?

Question 47: What are your reactions to these categories? Are there too many categories? Do they help you to answer the question?

Question 51: What are your reactions to these categories? Are there too many categories? Do they help you to answer the question?

Question 52: What are your reactions to these categories? Are there too many categories? Do they help you to answer the question?

Question 54: What are your reactions to these categories? Are there too many categories? Do they help you to answer the question? On questions 44, 45, 47, 51, 52, and 54 would percentages be preferable?

Question 55: How would you use the definitions of applied and basic research to help you answer the question?

Question 57: Should we have fewer categories or do we need more? How do they help you to answer the question?

Probes for Sample Question Formats

Throughout the survey NSF asked you to use several types of answer categories like the ones on this page. (Give them the sample question formats.)

Which format would be easiest for you to complete?

Probe: Why?

What is the best format to provide NSF with a more accurate number?

Probe: Why?

Do you have any other suggestions for answer categories?

As necessary:

Could you tell me more about that?

Is there anything else?

Closeout

That's all the questions we have. Do you have any closing comments you'd like to make?

Thanks so very much for your time today. Your comments will really help us refine the survey so that is more understandable and less burdensome for respondents to answer.