

Implementation Guide for Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Listening Sessions



U.S. Department of
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Use the guide to plan and implement KIIs and/or listening sessions with key individuals or small groups from the community. The selected individuals should provide information on community perceptions of the COVID-19 vaccine and highlight key barriers and enablers related to COVID-19 vaccine confidence and uptake.

This guide includes:

- A script for opening a KII/listening session
- Sample informed consent
- Core questions you can use as a discussion guide

The sessions should generally last about 60 minutes. A notetaker should accompany the facilitator for the KII/listening session to take detailed notes even if the session is recorded. You may also want to consider having a certified interpreter present in case the facilitator is not able to communicate in the language of limited English proficient populations.

You should adapt this guide—including the script, informed consent, and core discussion questions—based on the community context.

While the data you collect are important, equally important are the participants' perceptions that their voices are valued and their concerns are being heard, respected, and validated. When people know they and their life stories are understood, respected, and valued, they become more willing to hear what health officials are trying to communicate.

As you conduct your interviews, do your best to be respectful, smile, show interest, pay attention to non-verbal cues, and avoid distracting behaviors (e.g., no checking your phone.) Lastly, remember that the participants are the experts. In other words, they have information about what people in their communities think about COVID-19 vaccine that you do not have but would like to learn.

Planning a KII/Listening Session

1. Organize an internal meeting at the local health department to discuss ideas for a KII/ listening session.

- Consider what information you need to plan for COVID-19 vaccine rollout in the community.
- Identify potential partners, organizations, and individuals to participate in the session.
- Get contact information through relevant in-person connections or research organizations in the local community or on the Internet.
- Develop a tentative plan for conducting a KII/listening session.
- Identify and list key questions to discuss.
- Note any potential dates to propose to potential participants.
- Identify KII/listening session facilitators and notetakers from within your organization.

2. Contact community-based staff, organizations, and/or key figures. Schedule the KII/listening session.

- Identify and secure interpreter(s) if participants will have limited English proficiency and if facilitators aren't able to speak the participants' language(s).
- Contact organizations via telephone or email, as appropriate. Introduce yourself and explain the assessment goals and objectives.
- Explain to the participants how the information they provide will be useful for the assessment and the expected outcome of this KII/listening session.
- Propose potential dates and meeting mode (e.g., teleconference service).
- Ask for the participant's preference for participation (call/online session).
- Confirm dates and follow up prior to the session as a friendly reminder.

3. Conduct the KII/listening session as follows:

- Get consent for participation and recording.
- Make sure to reserve the first few minutes for an introduction and explain the objective(s) of the session to the participant(s).
- Take copious notes on the key themes/ideas presented in each session. There is no need to worry about details, as each session will be recorded.

4. After the listening session:

- Send a thank-you note to the organizer/trusted community member and participant(s), if applicable.
- Review and discuss the feedback/notes/translation among facilitators and notetakers.
- Summarize key themes/findings and next steps for each session.

Sample Agenda for Opening a KII/Listening Session

KII/Listening Session for COVID-19 Vaccine Confidence

Zoom meeting/call: [ENTER DATE]

Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions
- Informed Consent
- Brief Situational Update
- Closing Remarks and Thank You

Sample Script for Opening a KII/Listening Session

Welcome and Introductions

Hello, my name is _____, and I would like to thank you for joining us today for this KII/listening session on COVID-19 vaccine attitudes and perceptions. Please take a moment to briefly tell us your name and the organization you represent. After introductions, I will turn things over to [FACILITATOR'S NAME] for a brief situational update.

(Introductions around the phone.)

Thank you to everyone. We are so glad to have you here today.

We are also pleased to be joined today by [FACILITATOR'S NAME].

- Provide brief bio of local health department facilitator.
- EXAMPLE: Expand on the facilitator's role in the health department and the work they do.

Before we begin with this discussion, we would like to go over the informed consent.

Informed Consent

Read the script for informed consent below to the participant(s) after the initial introduction of the objective of the KII/listening session.

Script

Your participation in this KII/listening session is voluntary, and there will be no individual benefit from your participation. There will not be any negative effects if you decide you do not want to participate.

Your responses will be written anonymously and reported in aggregate. No one will know how you responded in the final report. We would like to hear your honest opinions about the topics we discuss. There are no right or wrong answers to any of our questions. We encourage you to speak openly and honestly about your opinions and experiences.

You can choose not to respond to a question at any time. You can also end the discussion at any time. If one of my questions is unclear, please stop me and I'll ask it in a different way. All information collected from these sessions will be stored securely and kept confidential. None of the comments you make during today's discussion will be linked with your name in any way. The discussion should take about 60 minutes. For more information about this project, contact [INSERT EMAIL AND PHONE NUMBER].

Do you agree to participate?

Yes No

(If respondent answers no, "Thank you for taking the time to speak with us today.")

In addition to taking notes, we would like to audio record this session. The recording will help us to summarize today's discussion concisely.

Do you agree to have this interview recorded? The data from the recordings will be anonymous.

Yes No

[If respondent answers no, let them know the session will not be recorded but notes will be taken. Then skip the next section and begin the interview at Brief Situational Update.]

[If respondent answers yes, begin recording and continue to the next section.]

The recording has begun and, just so we have a record of your agreement to have this interview recorded, I'm going to repeat the question. Do you agree to have this interview recorded?

Brief Situational Update

Provide a brief situational update for the KII/listening session. An example is found below, but adapt it to the current circumstances surrounding COVID-19 in the community/phase of vaccine rollout.

- Thank you all for being here today. As you all are aware, the COVID-19 vaccine is being rolled out across the country. Frontline healthcare providers and residents of long-term care facilities have been the first ones to get the vaccine, followed by other priority groups such as essential workers, seniors, and those with underlying conditions. Soon the vaccine will also be available for the general public. You/your organization is an important part of this community, and you may offer insights on what your community is thinking about when it comes to getting the COVID-19 vaccine. It is important for us as the local health department to understand the different issues that may affect whether people in the community get vaccinated or not, and what we can do to ensure everyone accepts and has access to the vaccine.
- With that, I would like to turn this all back to you and give each of you a chance to share your thoughts and insights with us. We have prepared several questions in advance, so I would like to share a few of them and allow each of you to respond. However, we are also happy to “go off script,” so to speak, as needed, if other issues emerge.

Main Discussion

Use the questions below to facilitate the main discussion. Adapt questions and add more probes as needed to elicit detailed information.

A. General Introduction

1. To start, it would be helpful to understand how COVID-19 has affected your community through the course of this pandemic. How do you think the introduction of the COVID-19 vaccine will affect your community?
2. What do you think about the COVID-19 vaccine?

B. COVID-19 Vaccine Attitudes in the Community

3. What do people in your community think about the vaccine?
What are some things you have heard from your community about the vaccine?
4. Do you think most people in your community would be willing get to the vaccine once it becomes available? Why or why not?

C. Barriers to and Enablers of COVID-19 Vaccination in the Community

5. What are the main reasons people in your community would want to get the vaccine?
Probe on life going back to normal, herd immunity.
6. What are the main reasons people in your community may not want the vaccine?
Probe on information, misinformation, attitudes toward vaccine, fear of side effects, trust in medical system/healthcare workers, fear of sharing personal data collected at vaccination distribution sites with public health and government officials.

7. There's a lot of information about the vaccine right now. What have you heard about the COVID-19 vaccine from sources you trust? How about information from sources you don't trust?
8. How easy do you think it would be for people in your community to get a COVID-19 vaccine if they wanted one? Probe on issues related to access to health facilities/clinics, work conflicts, household dynamics.
9. Are there any key barriers that people in your community are likely to face if they went out to get a COVID-19 vaccine?

D. Strategies to Improve Vaccine Confidence in the Community

10. How do you think your organization (non-government organization, faith-based organization, etc.) can contribute so more people can have confidence in and access to the vaccine?
11. How do you think local health departments can play a role in creating demand for the vaccine in your community? Probe on messaging content (making sure it is culturally and linguistically appropriate), information sources, managing misinformation, other communication materials, access to vaccination provider sites (including having medical interpretation services available), any virtual events, or campaigns.

Closing Remarks and Thank You

End of discussion: Thank the participants for their time and ask them if they have any questions. Provide brief information about how findings from this session will be shared with the participants.

After Conducting KIIs/Listening Sessions

The facilitator and notetaker should meet for a debriefing session after the KII and review notes to discuss key themes and issues highlighted in the discussion. A report of the notes from the KII/ listening session should be drafted. The findings should be used with any other assessment techniques to inform the next steps for COVID-19 vaccine rollout strategy.

Notetaking Template for KIIs and/or Listening Sessions

Use and adapt this template as needed, but make sure the areas below are covered in addition to any other issues the discussion may have generated.

- KII/Listening Session Title or Number:
- KII/Listening Session Date and Time:
- KII/Listening Session Participant(s) (do not use personal names):

FOR LISTENING SESSION ONLY

- Number of groups/organizations on this call: _____
- Number of individuals in this listening session: _____

Notes to be Taken During a Specific KII/Listening Session

QUESTIONS	SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES, IMPORTANT POINTS, DISCUSSED ACTION ITEMS, OTHER INTERESTING POINTS
What effect has COVID-19 had on this community?	
What are participants' thoughts about COVID-19 vaccine?	
Why do people in this community want to get vaccinated?	
Why would people in the community not be willing to get vaccinated?	
Who are trusted and untrusted sources/messengers in this community?	
What have they heard about COVID-19 vaccines from trusted sources?	
What have they heard from untrusted sources about COVID-19 vaccines?	
What barriers do participants or other individuals in the community face when trying to get vaccinated?	
What would make it easier for participants or other individuals in the community to get vaccinated?	
What are some ways to increase confidence in and uptake of COVID-19 vaccines in this community?	
What role can the health department, community-based organization, or other organization play to make sure everyone gets the vaccine?	

Synopsis of Above Discussions Based on Debriefing After a Specific KII/Listening Session

What are some summarized key themes from this KII/listening session?	
What are some immediate steps that should be taken?	