Overview:

Many times, when students are asked to do research or collect information, conducting an interview may be an option. This activity asks students to thoughtfully plan their interview considering types of questions and thinking through (in advance) how the interview might go. It allows students the opportunity to participate in a collaborative brainstorming exercise demonstrating the value of many perspectives in planning.

Learning Outcomes:

- Respond to a develop compelling questions, use valid information sources, and connect acquired knowledge to civic participation
- Build oral and written communications skills to listen and collect various perspectives and participate in respectful discourse
- Are prepared to discuss complex issues and ideas with people of different views, learning to speak with clarity and respectfulness

Instructions:

- Have the group discuss the most effective of the three interview approaches and then develop five key questions that should be part of each interview. From there, they should build out additional questions that will depend on who is being interviewed (considering the level of responsibility, organization, or department, etc. of those being interviewed) and what critical issues each team member would like addressed. In addition, as they go through the planning exercise, we want to weave in the questions on their sheet for them to consider.

Applications:

This is a great exercise to practice the collaborative brainstorming process in a classroom or student organization. It could be used to set up a course research project. It might also be useful for student government or a community group who wishes to collect information before proposing a change to policy.

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Developing Interview Questions

The Idaho National Laboratory Assessment Tool suggests three ways of organizing interviews:

(1) Structured Open-ended

(2) Semi-structured

(3) Unstructured

Please discuss the most effective of the three interview approaches for your purposes and then develop five key questions that should be part of each interview. Develop additional questions that are directed to your purpose (considering the level of responsibility, organization or department, etc. of those being interviewed) and the critical issues each team member would like addressed. In developing questions, please keep in mind the following:

- Who are the critical stakeholders with whom you need to speak?
- What is the most effective way to engage the people you encounter and get them to open up to you and provide you with useful information?
- How will you explain the purpose of the interview? Why do you wish to speak to that particular person or organization he or she represents? How will you explain the use which will be made of the information?
- What will be the ground rules for interviews? How will the interviews be recorded (notes, taping, e.g.)?
- Are there any risks, consequences or trade-offs you should be aware of in going into an interview?
- Do you want to use specific or open-ended questions? (e.g., Avoid leading questions, so interviewee isn't tempted to try and tell you what you want he or she thinks you want to hear)

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