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# Interview Script for Nonprofit Employees Involved in Neighborhood Tree Planting

Originally developed for use with the following project:  
“Evaluating the Ecological and Social Outcomes of Neighborhood and Nonprofit  
Urban Forestry: NUCFAC Grant”

Bloomington Urban Forestry Research Group (BUFRG)

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# **Interview Script for Nonprofit Employees Involved in Neighborhood Tree Planting**

Part 1:

Interview for Nonprofit Tree Planting Team  
Leader/Manager  
**(LEAD)**

"Hello, this is [interviewer], from Indiana University calling for our scheduled interview. Thanks for agreeing to speak with me today. How are things going?"

[allow for small talk]

Well, I don't want to keep you too long, so we can get started with the interview. I just want to let you know that we are recording the interview for research purposes; as stated on the study information sheet I sent you, our conversation and the recording will remain confidential. Anything you say will not be connected with you as an individual. We'll only be connecting employee responses in aggregate to [name of nonprofit]. Also, regarding confidentiality, if you would please avoid discussing the interview questions with your colleagues whom we may also interview, we'd appreciate it; we want to avoid influencing the answers we receive. Does that all sound agreeable to you?" [Their response... if they do not agree, we will not record and will let them know that]

"As I suggested when scheduling this interview, we will schedule a follow-up interview with you to discuss more detail about tree-planting projects. Today, I just want to gather some key details that will help me structure those follow-up questions for you and the other employees I interview.

"I'm interested in learning more about the program through which you plant trees with applicant groups like neighborhoods (or other similar civic groups). In particular, I'm interested in the tree planting program between 2009 and 2011. Most of the following questions I ask you will be in present tense and then, for most, I'll ask if there's been change over time so that we can be sure to consider that 09-11 time frame. OK?" [Their response; begin with the first question below].

€ What's the name of the program through which you plant trees with the groups like neighborhoods (or other similar civic groups)?

Hopefully there is only one, but if there are two or more, ask all questions for each program.

- € Where does the **tree planting program(s)** fit in your organizational structure?
  - € Has that always been the case? If not,
    - € When did that change?
    - € How did that change?
    - € Why did that change?
  
- € How long has the **program(s)** been in existence?
  
- € Are tree plantings through this **program** done on both public and private lands? **If both,**
  - € What proportion of the trees are planted on each property type—
    - € Private?
    - € Public?
  - € Are there differences about the plantings or subsequent tree care depending on the property type where trees are planted? Please describe.
  
- € What's the size of your average tree-planting in this **program(s)**?
  - € Geographic area?
  - € Number of trees?
  - € Number of group participants (as in residents in a neighborhood)?
  - € Number of nonprofit employees significantly involved?
  - € Have any of the figures changed a lot over time? If so,
    - € How?
    - € When?
    - € Why do think?
  
- € Is the **tree planting program** a part of any larger programs?
  - € In the nonprofit?
  - € City?
  - € State or national level?

- € Has the [tree-planting program](#) always been a part of these larger programs? If not,
  - € How did that change?
  - € When
  - € Why
  
- € What do these program(s) do for your [tree planting program\(s\)](#) in terms of support or facilitation?
  
- € What do these program(s) require of the nonprofit and the [tree planting program\(s\)](#)?
  
- € Are there any [other] *key* organizations or entities that have significantly helped facilitate your [tree planting program\(s\)](#) (and that were doing so in 09-11 timeframe)? Can you list these organizations or entities and tell me what they do to help facilitate [the tree planting program\(s\)](#)?
  
  
- € Do you have any formal agreements with these groups and can you describe those agreements?
  
- € Do you have to involve any of these groups in your decision-making related to [the tree-planting program\(s\)](#)? **And if so,**
  - € For what kinds of decisions?
  
  
- € Which of these organizations has been most critical to your work?
  
  
- € Describe your relationship with the city government and the urban forester(s). Has it been a good working relationship?

[If they plant on public property]

- € Does the city have to approve the location and species of trees you plant on public property through [the tree planting program\(s\)](#)?
- € Do you have any agreements with the city regarding the *care* of trees planted through [the tree planting program\(s\)](#)?
  - € Has it always been that way? (Could probe and ask about city conflicts with new sidewalk or road repair in terms of city removing trees)
- € Any other important roles of the city in [your tree planting program\(s\)](#)?
- € Do you have a template that groups (like neighborhoods) use to develop a plan for how they plan to care for the trees you plant with them through [the program\(s\)](#)? If so,
  - € How can we get a copy?
- € If you offer any kind of educational or training materials to groups regarding planting or caring for trees or organizing themselves, can we get a copy of that information?
- € Do you use a form that volunteers planting or caring for trees fill out and give to the nonprofit in [the tree-planting program\(s\)](#) and if so, what information does that include on it?
  - € How do you use that information?
  - € Can I get a copy of that form?
- € Do you record the location of each tree you plant through [the program](#) and if so, how?
  - € Has this changed over time? If so,
    - € How

- € When
- € Why

- € Finally, have there been any big changes for the nonprofit in the past 5/10 years? For example, a mission change, etc.?
- € Similarly, any major changes for [the tree planting program](#)?

***Thanks so much for your time! That's all the questions I have for you for this preliminary interview. I'm going to follow-up right now with an email to you that asks for just a few specific figures, like budget numbers, etc., which I think you may want to check records to answer. I'll also remind you in that email about the documents we discussed that you could share. Also, I'll ask you to check your schedule for another hour of your time in the next few weeks for a more detailed interview about tree planting projects through [the program\(s\)](#). Sound ok?***

***[allow for comments]***

***Great! Thanks again and have a nice day!***

# **Interview Script for Nonprofit Employees Involved in Neighborhood Tree Planting**

Part 2:

Interview for All Nonprofit Employees Involved in  
Neighborhood Tree Planting (Including Team  
Leader/Manager)

**(ALL)**



"Hello, this is [interviewer], from Indiana University calling for our scheduled interview. Thanks for agreeing to speak with me today. How are things going?"

[allow for small talk]

Well, I don't want to keep you too long, so we can get started with the interview. I just want to let you know that we are recording the interview for research purposes; as stated on the study information sheet I sent you, our conversation and the recording will remain confidential. Anything you say will not be connected with you as an individual. We'll only be connecting employee responses in aggregate to [name of nonprofit]. Also, regarding confidentiality, if you would please avoid discussing the interview questions with your colleagues whom we may also interview, we'd appreciate it; we want to avoid influencing the answers we receive. Does that all sound agreeable to you?" [Their response... if they do not agree, we will not record and will let them know that]

"As I suggested when scheduling this interview, if this begins to run too long and we need to schedule a follow-up interview to finish, just let me know. I may be asking some questions that you feel like you've told someone at IU the answers to already; however, in order for our data to be consistent across nonprofits, we need answers to the same questions for all interviews. Thanks for your patience with this."

"I'm interested in learning more about the program through which you plant trees with applicant groups like neighborhoods (or other similar civic groups). In particular, I'm interested today in your perspectives on the tree planting program, [name of program], and projects that occurred between 2009 and 2011. These are the projects about which we're surveying project participants, and for which we're collecting tree data. Most of the following questions I ask you will be in present tense and then, for most, I'll ask if there's been change over time so that we can be sure to consider that 09-11 time frame. OK?" [Their response; begin with the first question below].

€ To begin, how long have you worked for the nonprofit?

- € What's your current position?
  
- € Have you always worked in this position for the nonprofit, and if not, what was your former position and when did you change positions?
  
- € **Tell me about the mission / goals of [Nonprofit] in general**
  
- € Has that changed in the time that you've been with the nonprofit? **If so,**
  - € How?

***Now I'd like to ask you some general questions about the tree planting program through which you plant trees with groups of people...the [name of program]...***

***We realize that you have more than one program like this, can you keep them both in mind when you're answering these questions and tell us when you can think of differences between the programs***

**OR**

***How are these programs different? Requirements about what the neighborhoods have to do, what happens on the ground, etc.***

- € **What are the mission and goals of this program?**
  
- € Have the mission/goal(s) changed in the time you've worked for the nonprofit? **If so,**
  - € How?

- € In general, when do you consider a tree planting project under this program to be successful? What does a successful project look like?

*I'm going to ask you some specific questions about the tree planting program but first I'd like to know...*

- € Are there any organizations or entities that have significantly helped facilitate the tree planting program (and that were doing so in 09-11 timeframe)? Can you list these organizations or entities and tell me what they do to help facilitate the tree planting program?

- € Do you have any formal agreements with these groups and can you describe those agreements?

- € Do you have to involve any of these groups in your decision-making related to the tree-planting program? **And if so,**

- € For what kinds of decisions?

- € Which of these organizations has been most critical to your work?

- € Describe your relationship with the city government and the urban forester(s). Has it been a good working relationship?

*You might have mentioned some of this, but now I want to talk about some details related to the initial process in implementing a tree planting...*

- € First, are there different types of groups (e.g., a church vs. neighborhood vs. a school) that participate in the program and if so, can you give me some examples? **IF YES,**

- € Are there different requirements of the groups you work with to plant trees based on the *type* of group? [If yes, tell the interviewee we'd like to focus more on neighborhood-type plantings and their requirements in general, but that if they recall differences as we go along, you'd appreciate them making note of them by group type]
- € **Do groups receive any kind of information about what exactly is required of them to get trees? If yes,**
  - € How is that information disseminated? Orally, through a website, by email or paper copies?
- € **Do all groups have to complete an application to get trees from the nonprofit? If yes,**
  - € Has this changed over time? **If so,**
    - € When
    - € Why
  - € What information do groups have to include in the application? [If not completely obvious, probe for why they need particular pieces of information]
    - € Has it always been required to submit an application with these components? **If not,**
      - € what changed?
      - € when
      - € why
- € **What [other] information do you gather in order to approve or deny a group planting and how do you get that information?**
  - € Has this changed over time? **if so**
    - € When?
    - € why?

- € Do you ever reject a group that has sought a tree planting? **If so,**
  - € Why? Why would you choose one group for a tree planting over another; what are your selection criteria?

- € Has this changed over time? **if so,**
  - € When?
  - € Why?

- € Do you require that a group seeking trees be formally organized (like a neighborhood association, a church group, etc.)?
  - € Why / why not?

- € Has that changed over time; **if so,**
  - € When?
  - € Why?

- € Do you sometimes approach a group that hasn't approached you for trees initially? **If so,**
  - € Why would you (*as a representative of the nonprofit*) solicit a group-- can you list the reasons?

- € Has that changed over time? **if so,**
  - € When

€ why?

***I'd like to know more about what role the applicant group plays. Once you've approved a tree planting...***

- € **Do you have a planning meeting with the group or a leader of the group?**
  - € **If yes**, is that suggested or required?
  
- € **Do groups participate in siting the trees?**
  - € **If yes**, is that suggested or required?
  
- € **Do groups participate in choosing their species?**
  - € **If yes**, is that suggested or required?
  
- € **Do groups pay for the trees or raise some funds?**
  - € **If yes**, is that suggested or required?
  
- € **Do groups commit to plant the trees?**
  - € **If yes**, is that suggested or required?
    - € What proportion or number of individuals must commit?
    - € Do they each sign an agreement or contract?
  
- € **Do groups commit to be involved in tree care like watering?**
  - € **If yes**, is that suggested or required?
    - € Is there a set number / proportion of individuals that have to commit?
    - € Do they each sign an agreement or contract?
  
- € **Do groups develop and submit to you a formal plan about how they plan to care for the trees?**
  - € **If yes**, is that suggested or required?
  
- € **Do you help spread the word within the applicant group about there being a tree-planting?**

- € If so, how?
- € Have any of those planning steps (or their formality in requirement) changed over time? If so,
  - € When?
  - € Why?
- € Do you have a day when you plant trees with the applicant groups [if Yes, keep going; if no - St. Louis- see alternatives below]

*So let's talk a bit about the planting day...*

- € Do volunteers sign-in with the nonprofit on the tree planting day?
  - € If yes, is that suggested or required?
    - € What info do you get?
    - € How do you use it?
  - € Has that changed over time? If so,
    - € When
    - € Why?
- € Are individuals that are going to care for the trees post-planting there at the planting?
  - € If yes, is that suggested or required of them?
    - € Has that changed over time? If yes,
      - € When
      - € Why?

**St. Louis alternatives:**

*So let's talk a bit about the tree planting...*

- € Do you have any way of knowing exactly who volunteers and plants the trees (in the applicant group or otherwise)?
    - € **If yes**, please describe how you know which individuals are involved **(if they haven't already)**
      - € **If applicable to their strategy** - is that strategy of collecting volunteer information suggested or required by the nonprofit?
        - € What info do you get?
        - € How do you use it?
    - € Has that changed over time? **If so**,
      - € When?
      - € Why?
- 
- € Do you know if the individuals that are going to care for the trees post-planting are there at the planting?
  - € **If yes**, is that suggested or required of them by the nonprofit?
    - € Has that changed over time? **If so**,
      - € When?
      - € Why?

**Resume for all NPs:**

*Now I'd like to talk a little bit about training and education of groups that receive trees...*

**Are group participants educated about or trained in tree planting and/or tree care and if so, can you describe that process? [Be sure to be listening for the training details below- check off when any of the following are answered so you won't have to ask the question]**

- € **If yes**, is that suggested or required of group members?
  
- € **Does the training cover planting?**
  - € Do you offer verbal and/or written instruction (if latter, paper/electronic)?
  - € Do you offer a demonstration during the training?



- € When is this training conducted?
  
- € **Does the training cover watering?**
  - € Do you offer verbal and/or written instruction (if latter, paper/electronic)?
  - € Do you offer a demonstration during the training?
  - € When is this training conducted?
  
- € **Does the training cover mulching?**
  - € Do you offer verbal and/or written instruction (if latter, paper/electronic)?
  - € Do you offer a demonstration during the training?
  - € When is this training conducted?
  
- € **Does the training cover staking?**
  - € Do you offer verbal and/or written instruction (if latter, paper/electronic)?
  - € Do you offer a demonstration during the training?
  - € When is this training conducted?
  
- € **Does the training cover pruning?**
  - € Do you offer verbal and/or written instruction (if latter, paper/electronic)?
  - € Do you offer a demonstration during the training?
  - € When is this training conducted?
  
- € **Does any other training of the applicant group occur?**
  
- € **Have any of those strategies regarding training changed over time?**
  - € **If so**, when and why?

***In addition to training, do you educate the group about...***

- € **The benefits of trees? **If yes**,**
  - € Do you offer verbal and/or written education (if latter, paper/electronic)?
  - € When is this shared?

- € **Do you provide education about general tree biology or ecology? If yes,**
  - € Do you offer oral and/or written education (if latter, paper/electronic)?
  - € When is this shared?
  
- € **Do you provide education about coordinating and motivating people in the group? I.e., Organizing skills? If yes,**
  - € Do you offer verbal and/or written education (if latter, paper/electronic)?
  - € When is this shared?
  
- € **Do you offer any other education to the applicant groups that you can describe?**
  - € Do you offer that information verbally and/or in written form (if latter, paper/electronic)?
  - € When is this information shared?
  
- € **Have any of your educational components or the way such information is exchanged changed over time? If yes,**
  - € What changed?
  - € When?
  - € why?

**For St. Louis, say: *I realize you may not know, but just in case...***

***On the day of the tree planting, is each tree...***

- € Watered?
- € Mulched?
- € Staked?
- € Pruned?
- € Are any other management actions taken for each planted tree?
  
- € Have any of those strategies for post-planting maintenance changed over time? **If yes,**

- € How?
- € When?
- € why?
  
- € **If not addressed:** Are any kinds of soil amendments done?
  - € Has this changed over time?
  - € When?
  - € why?
  
- € **If not addressed:** Is the location of each planted tree recorded and if so, how?
  - € Has this changed over time?
  - € When?
  - € why?
  
- € Do you help coordinate social activities for the group around the planting work?
  - € Has this changed over time?
  - € When?
  - € why?

***Now let's talk a little about the maintenance of the trees after planting...***

- € Just to clarify, what kinds of maintenance of the trees do you require of the group—just watering?
  
- € Do you require that each tree is **watered** a particular amount/frequency/duration? (For example, some nonprofits say, 15 gallons/week when it doesn't rain for two seasons.
  - € Has that changed over time?
    - € How?
    - € When?

€ Why?

€ Do you offer suggestions to the group as to how they can accomplish **watering**?

€ Do you give the group any equipment in order to help them accomplish **watering**?

€ Has that changed over time?

€ How?

€ When?

€ Why?

***If they have listed other kinds of the maintenance is required, repeat the underlined questions for each of the types of maintenance required by the group (replacing the word “watered” or “watering” with the other maintenance activity).***

€ **Do you require that someone in the group monitor the condition of the trees? *If yes,***

€ With what frequency and duration?

€ Has that changed over time?

€ How?

€ When?

€ why?

***So I asked you about whether the group members have to monitor the trees...***

€ **How do YOU know that the groups are following through with their commitment to care for the trees? To be explicit, do you check on the trees once they're planted? *If so,***

- € Do you physically go look at the trees or do you communicate with the group? **If either,**
  - € How regularly?
  - € Is that required of you as an employee?
  - € Is that required of the Nonprofit through contracts with the city (or other entity)?
  
- € **What would happen if you were to find that trees were not doing well and you suspected (or knew) they were not being cared for as agreed upon?**
  - € Is your response reflective of a formal policy?
  
- € **What do you do if a tree dies or “goes missing”?**
  - € Is the tree replaced? **If so,**
    - € By whom?
  
  - € If a tree were to be replaced, who cares for it and what is the process of arranging for that care?
  
  - € If a tree were to be replaced, how would you update that information in your records?
  
  - € Are any of those strategies related to a replaced tree formalized in policy? If so, can you explain?
  
  - € Have any of those strategies related to replacing dead or missing trees changed over time? **If so,**
    - € How?
    - € When?
    - € why?

***So I'd like to try to understand how much autonomy and collaboration occurs between the nonprofit and the tree-planting groups. Let's think of this in terms of a 5-point scale where a 5 means that the NP makes all the decisions, a 3 means complete collaboration (equal say from NP and group), and 1 means the group makes all the decisions. Make sense? Can you give me a ranking for...***

- € Planning the planting
- € Planning the care of planted trees
- € Implementing the care of the trees
- € Resolving conflicts among the group members
  
- € Would you say any of those rankings have changed over time? **If so,**
  - € How?
  - € When?
  - € Why?

***Now I'd like to ask you about any effects you've observed from tree planting projects you've administered...***

For those groups with whom you've worked, have you been able to observe changes in the groups that you would attribute to the tree planting and/or tree care? If so, can you describe the kinds of changes?

Why do you attribute those changes to tree planting/care?

Have you noticed particular characteristics about planting projects that make them more successful?

...about groups that make them more successful?

***Now I'm going to ask you a few standard demographic-type questions or "describe-yourself"-type questions. If you don't feel comfortable answering any of them, just say "pass."***

How long have you lived in the city?

Which best describes your gender? Male/Female?

What race/ethnicity do you consider yourself?

Can you describe your education / training?

Are you a certified arborist?

In an average week, do you get ~3 hours of moderately-intense activity (like brisk walking, hiking, tennis, or biking)? Another equivalent metric is ~30 minutes of such activity per day.

Do you consider yourself an environmentalist?

***That's all the questions I have for you. Are there any final comments you'd like to make about the tree planting program or anything particularly important about the program and projects that occurred between 2009 and 2011?***

***[allow for comments]***

*Well, thanks so much for your time. It may happen that I later realize I that I'm missing a piece of information. If that happens, would you mind terribly if I were to be back in touch with you?*

*[allow for comments]*

*Thanks again and have a nice day!*

*[sign-off]*