

## **General Points**

- 1. Focus Group Questions should**
  - **Be short and to the point**
  - **Address one single idea**
  - **Unambiguous**
  - **Open ended**

### ***Order***

- a. Open with at least one engagement question**
  - b. Follow on with 3-4 exploration questions**
  - c. Exit question**
  
- 2. Tell participants that Focus Group will take approximately one hour.**
  
- 3. Focus group should ideally consist of a moderator and a co-moderator. Both should record the responses.**
  
- 4. Moderator should:**
  - **Listen actively and display empathy**
  - **Be able to thin and write at the same time**
  - **Express and display that all participants regardless of background have something to offer**
  - **Keep personal views out of discussion**
  - **Appropriately manage group dynamics**
    - **Do not respond with anger to an insult or slight**
    - **Instead express that discussion needs to stay productive**
    - **Do not allow one person to monopolize the conversation**
      - **Ask individuals by name what they think or for their feedback**
    - **Be relatable, e.g. do not place a White individual as the moderator discussion racial equity among African Americans.**
  
- 5. Co-moderator should (if available):**
  - **Set up and ensure proper functioning of recording device**

- Take notes
- Make notes of body language
  - Do people squirm, roll their eyes, keep touching their face or rubbing their legs, sit forward when answering.

## 6. Forms

- All participants must sign a consent form, no exceptions.
- All participants must sign in. The sign in sheet may have a statement that information will be kept confidential but all participants must sign in.

## Best Practices

### 1. Opening

- Start with an icebreaker question
  - If you could have the power of flight or invisibility which would you choose?
  - What was the last movie you saw?
  - If you could have dinner with anyone, who would it be?

### 2. Room set up

- Table and chairs should be arranged such that the respondents can make a semi-circle (or U) around the moderator. The co moderator should sit beside or behind the moderator – typically behind.
- Provide snacks and beverages to the participants preferably within arms reach so they do not have to get up.
- Try to avoid, as much as possible, a setting where the respondents will have a lot to look at behind the moderator. A few pictures on a wall are okay but it should be excessively busy or have the potential for a lot of activity. For example, a plate glass window overlooking a marsh, highway or bridge would not be preferable

### 3. Completeness

- It is your responsibility as the moderator to get complete information and to get everyone to engage. To this degree you should get participants to fully explain their answers.
  - Can you tell me more about that?

- Help me understand who you mean?
  - Can you give me an example?
- If there is a lot of information or stream of consciousness you should summarize the statement prior to moving on and then ask for agreement of the summary.
  - If I am hearing you correctly then [Summary]. Is that what you mean?

#### 4. Neutrality

- You hold a position of authority and trust in the group and any perceived influence will be felt and can bias responses. Do not raise your eyebrows, agree or disagree, roll your eyes, praise or denigrate, etc. This also goes for your tone of voice. Your voice should remain steady, airy and calm. Avoid any intonation that could indicate a desired response or point of interest.

#### 5. Dealing with Challenges

- *The Know it All:* "Thank you. What other people think?" – Notice it does not state "the rest of you"
- *Dominator:* "Let's have some other comments."
- *Rambling:* Break eye contact, focus on something else, cut in when they stop for a breath with "Thank you for that. Do other people have thoughts on that?"
- *The Shy one:* Make eye contact, call on them, smile.
- *The quiet talker:* Ask them to repeat their response a bit more loudly.

#### 6. Once the focus group is over, thank all participants and distribute their thank you gifts.

- Immediately after participants leave the moderator and co-moderator should review their notes together with the recorder still on. If there are points of disagreement then clarify them immediately and get it on tape.