

# Focus Group Guide











## WHAT:

- 90-minute to 2-hour moderated discussion with a structured agenda.
- Participants in the group have something in common and/or are all there to provide their perspectives on a particular topic.
- Questions can be qualitative or quantitative.
- Can be combined with surveys or interviews or other evaluation methods to collect more data.

## WHY:

- Enables the evaluator to ask follow-up questions to get more details, compared to surveys or online polls.
- Focuses feedback on a specific topic or on specific groups of individuals with similar perspectives.
- Enables participants to learn from other's perspectives and add their own details to form a more robust picture of perspectives on the given topic.

## HOW:

 Determine recruitment strategy. Ensure randomization. Plan on 8 to 15 participants per group.	 Have a notetaker or use tools such as Otter.AI to support transcription of the qualitative data.
 Establish agenda and guiding slides (templates in additional resources).	 Provide participants the chance to review the summary notes and add any additional details they feel are missing.
 Secure location information and send agenda and plan to participants a minimum of 1 week in advance.	 Use polling tools, such as MS Forms, Google Forms, Survey Monkey, etc. to collect any relevant quantitative data in the session, or use hand-raising / nods, or similar and record.
 Provide monetary incentive for participating.	 Clarify how decisions/results will be shared with participants after the focus group is done.



## OPTIONS TO EMBED EVALUATION:

Level of Engagement	Key PPCE Activities	Options to Embed Evaluation	Analysis
<b>Inform</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leaflets, posters, other informational items</li> <li>• Social media postings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• QR code on flyer to track use of the informational materials</li> <li>• Website/social media analytics</li> <li>• Counts of informational materials distributed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simple dashboard with counts displayed on agency webpage or intranet</li> </ul>
<b>Consult</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentations or exhibitions</li> <li>• Meetings or workshops</li> </ul>	<p>All of the items from Inform, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flip charts/virtual white boards</li> <li>• AI assisted notes from meeting</li> <li>• Participant worksheets</li> <li>• Short meeting polls conducted in real-time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summary of key themes</li> <li>• Dashboard of relevant meeting metrics</li> <li>• Dashboard of poll results displayed on agency webpage or intranet</li> </ul>
<b>Collaborate</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Web-based and asynchronous collaboration platforms</li> <li>• Photo voice</li> </ul>	<p>All items from Inform, and Consult plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Web analytics</li> <li>• Collaborative document</li> <li>• Pictures/video themes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summary of key themes</li> <li>• Journey map/photo montage</li> <li>• Dashboard of relevant meeting metrics</li> </ul>
<b>Empower</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community forums and action planning sessions</li> </ul>	<p>All items from previous levels of engagement, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Action plan document</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completed action plan</li> <li>• Journey map/photo montage</li> <li>• Dashboard of relevant meeting metrics</li> </ul>



## OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES:

Outputs	Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear understanding of how the agency is defining the problem.</li> <li>• Individuals and communities were clear about their role.</li> <li>• Identification of “who” has the final say or deciding authority.</li> <li>• List of individuals who may be affected by the decision.</li> <li>• Identification of the resources needed to conduct public participation.</li> <li>• Clear understanding of how the information will be used.</li> <li>• Identification of the level of participation.</li> <li>• List of relevant groups/individuals who need to be engaged.</li> <li>• List of relevant groups who are already engaged and can be a resource for the agency.</li> <li>• Any barriers to access were addressed by the agency.</li> <li>• Number of individuals participating in the focus group.</li> <li>• Number of key themes.</li> <li>• Understanding how communities/individuals feel about the federal government.</li> <li>• Understanding the reason behind unfavorable or favorable views.</li> <li>• Understanding if there are differences in perception based on demographics.</li> <li>• Report with qualitative information which provides context about the problem.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Short-term:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All relevant groups and communities agree on the problem.</li> <li>• Meetings are accessible to all.</li> <li>• All communication material is accessible to all.</li> <li>• Resources are allocated equitably.</li> </ul> <p><b>Medium and Long-term:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buy-in from public and relevant groups.</li> <li>• Agency does not overpromise participants about the influence they have on final decisions.</li> <li>• Agency is better prepared to conduct the participatory process.</li> <li>• Effective public participation process is designed.</li> <li>• Participants are satisfied with the process and outcomes.</li> <li>• The full range of perspectives needed to conduct meaningful public participation is achieved.</li> <li>• Changing perception of federal government.</li> <li>• Participants are fully aware of and understand what is being communicated.</li> <li>• Effective participation by individuals and community members.</li> <li>• Increasing trust in federal institutions.</li> <li>• Barriers to public participation are alleviated.</li> <li>• Participatory process enables people/communities to influence the decisions and actions that affect their lives.</li> </ul>

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- [Partnership for Public Service Focus Group Agenda Template and Guiding Slides Template](#)
- [Focus Groups: Urban Institute](#)
- [Focus Group Tip Sheet, Office of Population Affairs](#)
- [Center for Disease Control and Prevention: Evaluation Brief: Focus Groups](#)