Online Forum Guide

PARTNERSHIP
FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

WHAT:

- Tool used to ask questions of a group of individuals that may come from a similar or diverse population.
- Questions can be qualitative or quantitative.
- Can be combined with focus groups or interviews or other evaluation methods to collect more data.

WHY:

- Enables the evaluator to collect data on many participants in a short period of time.
- Combines written and verbal feedback while allowing an asynchronous platform for greater engagement and accessibility.

HOW:

✓ Determine the goals of the forum.	✓ If applicable, use polling tools, such as MS Forms, Google Forms, Survey Monkey, etc.
✓ Identify the participant selection strategy.	✓ Establish the guidelines and rules for participating in the forum, i.e. code of conduct.
✓ Identify alternative methods of engagement if there are barriers to internet access.	✓ Provide clear timeline for forum and specifics for accountability on how the information will/will not be used.
✓ Determine whether the forum will be moderated or unmoderated.	✓ Clarify how decisions/results will be shared with participants after the forum ends.

OPTIONS TO EMBED EVALUATION:

Level of Engagement	Key PPCE Activities	Options to Embed Evaluation	Analysis
Inform	• Leaflets, posters, other informational items • Social media postings • Presentations or exhibitions • Meetings or workshops	• QR code on flyer to track use of the informational materials • Website/social media analytics • Counts of informational materials distributed • Flip charts/virtual white boards • AI assisted notes from meeting/interview • Participant worksheets • Short meeting polls conducted in real-time	• Simple dashboard with counts displayed on agency webpage or intranet • Summary of key themes • Dashboard of relevant meeting metrics • Dashboard of poll results displayed on agency webpage or intranet

OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES:

Outputs	Outcomes
• Clear understanding of how the agency is defining the problem. • Individuals and communities were clear about their role. • Identification of "who" has the final say or deciding authority. • List of individuals who may be affected by the decision. • Identification of the resources needed to conduct public participation. • Clear understanding of how the information will be used. • Identification of the level of participation. • List of relevant groups/individuals who need to be engaged. • List of relevant groups who are already engaged and can be a resource for the agency. • Any barriers to access were addressed by the agency. • Number of individuals engaging with the online forum. • Time spent with individuals/communities. • Understanding how communities/individuals feel about the federal government. • Understanding the reason behind unfavorable or favorable views. • Understanding if there are differences in perception based on demographics. • Number of key themes or responses/votes from the online forum.	**Short-term:** • All relevant groups and communities agree on the problem. • Meetings are accessible to all. • All communication material is accessible to all. • Resources are allocated equitably. **Medium and Long-term:** • Buy-in from public and relevant groups. • Agency does not overpromise participants about the influence they have on final decisions. • Agency is better prepared to conduct the participatory process. • Effective public participation process is designed. • Participants are satisfied with the process and outcomes. • The full range of perspectives needed to conduct meaningful public participation is achieved. • Changing perception of federal government. • Participants are fully aware of and understand what is being communicated. • Effective participation by individuals and community members. • Increasing trust in federal institutions. • Barriers to public participation are alleviated. • Participatory process enables people/communities to influence the decisions and actions that affect their lives.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- [Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center: Conducing Public Forums and Listening Sessions](#)