

APPENDIX F: FOCUS GROUP

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

This appendix describes the steps to facilitate a focus group.

DEFINE THE GOAL OF THE FOCUS GROUP

To gather input on residents' perception of the State and Division Neighborhood and discover the community's identity. To identify the strengths and weaknesses of the State and Division Neighborhood (ambiance, amenities, infrastructure, etc.). To develop a better understanding of the current communication channels, and to explore other potential forms of media that could be used to spread awareness of community events.

IDENTIFY TARGET AUDIENCES

- Young, single, resident homeowner and/or renter
- Young family, resident homeowner and/or renter
- Young, single, aspiring homeowner and/or renter
- Young family, aspiring homeowner and/or renter
- New retirees
- Empty nesters
- Current landlords
- Local real estate agents and/or investors

COMPOSE THE FOCUS GROUP SCRIPT

See the "Focus Group Script" in Appendix E.

PILOT TEST THE SCRIPT

This enables you to gauge the timing of the discussion and test whether the questions are as fluid and comprehensible as you imagined. Ask for specific feedback and suggestions for improvement. If you can organize a pilot test, then you should at least gather 3 or 4 people that mirror your target audience as closely as possible and try out the questions with them.¹

¹ Drake, P. (n.d.). Best Practices in Research & Evaluation - Focus Groups. Retrieved June 21, 2019, from https://www.etr.org/ebi/assets/File/etr_best_practices_focus_groups.pdf

ARRANGE FOCUS GROUP LOGISTICS

- Identify any legal barriers
- IRB Certification
 - Make sure to have your focus group script reviewed by an Institutional Review Board (IRB)
 - For further information: <https://www.bellevuecollege.edu/irb/review/>
- Select a location
 - Easily accessible
 - Central location
 - Safe and comfortable environment for participants
 - Enough space so that participants don't feel crowded
 - Acoustic setting
- Materials and Supplies
 - Nametags
 - Sign-in sheet
 - Chart paper
 - Pens
 - Markers
 - Voting stickers
 - Blank letter paper
 - Printed agendas / worksheets
 - Post-It notes
 - Direction signage
 - Potential logo designs
 - Recording Device
- Food and Refreshments
 - Be considerate of potential cultural restrictions
 - Try to avoid common allergies
 - Make sure the food is healthy (no fried foods)
 - Desert is always a bonus

RECRUITMENT AND INCENTIVES

- The ideal number is 6-10, so you should recruit 8-12.
 - If there are more responses than expected, maintain a waiting list Create Eventbrite for the focus group
 - Generate QR code
 - Distribute the link via:
 - Door-to-door fliers
 - Post fliers in community centers
 - Create fliers to be disseminated through an E-mail blast
 - Partner with local churches to conduct outreach
 - Make sure all promotional material is accessible to all target audiences (language)
 - Potential incentives:
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- Food and refreshments
- Prize drawing
 - More cost-effective than giving a gift to all participants
 - \$50-\$100
 - Gift cards
 - Household items

SELECT AN EXPERIENCED FACILITATOR

The facilitator should be comfortable with the material included in the focus group script in order to identify when the responses or conversation begin to get off topic. Additionally, the facilitator should have exceptional interpersonal skills and be able to manage a collection of differing personalities. Ideally, the participants should not know who the facilitator is; this helps the participants feel more comfortable discussing sensitive information.²

CONDUCT THE FOCUS GROUP

Be sure to:

- Arrive early and be ready to start on time
- Begin by thanking the participants for volunteering
- Inform the participants about the goal of the focus group
- Record. Record. Record. Gather as much concrete information as possible!
- End on time
- Thank the participants again
- Discuss how the information will be shared with the participants and/or the public

ANALYZING THE DATA

- Have an experienced researcher to analyze the data
- Be sure to delete participant names before you begin analyzing the data
- Remember that the findings are not statistically representative and will not generate valid generalizations, but rather the data will provide you a degree of depth on the subject
- Three steps to follow when analyzing results from your focus group:
 - Combine the answers from all participants in all groups
 - Categorize similar answers to identify common themes and sub-themes
 - Review answers and categories to identify trends, patterns, and outliers, as well as differences between subpopulations
- Combine your findings with other data (i.e. surveys, interviews, etc.)

FACILITATOR REMINDERS

- Stay neutral!
- Ask for expansion, clarity, examples
- Avoid leading questions

²Drake, P. (n.d.). Best Practices in Research & Evaluation - Focus Groups. Retrieved June 21, 2019, from https://www.etr.org/ebi/assets/File/etr_best_practices_focus_groups.pdf

- Allow for long pauses
- Probe for differing experiences or opinions
- Encourage equal participation
- Paraphrase for accuracy

TIPS & TRICKS FOR FACILITATOR

Organizing and broadening participation

- Stacking and interrupting the stack
 - Providing speaker order. Can interrupt stack to provide spontaneity in case of provocative remarks. Can be too controlled for small or fast-paced groups
- Encouraging
 - Give people an indirect gentle nudge to speak up
 - Can use the clock to support this
 - Example: "We have a couple of minutes until we move onto the next question, perhaps we should hear from someone who hasn't talked in a while"
- Balancing/finding like minds
 - Inviting members to give opposing perspectives (if you think folks are holding back) or inviting them to give voice to convergent perspectives
- Making space for quiet people
 - Address by name only if you have a really good judgment that this person has something to say

Helping people make their points

- Paraphrasing/mirroring
 - Helps people feel heard
 - Example: "Did I get that right?"
- Drawing people out
 - Get the person to keep talking
 - "Tell me more"
 - "Can you tell me more"
 - "How so?"

Helping people stay on track

- Sequencing
 - If you notice that two different topics arise, validate both topics. Focus on the first for a few minutes, move to the second for a few minutes, then ask the group to decide what to focus on next.
- Calling for responses
 - Preserve the focus of the discussion while asking for new speakers.
- Deliberate refocusing
 - Best phrased as a question - "Is now a good time to switch topics?"
- Tracking/asking for themes:
 - If you notice more than two different topics come up, then mention you are discussing several issues all at the same time. After that, either you or the participants identify the themes. When list is complete have people start up again.

