



## Focus Group Development Checklist

### Instructions

Use this checklist as you develop your focus groups. Although it is a checklist, the purpose of its use is not to “check” every item. Rather, the goal of this tool is encourage thoughtful reflection and consideration of critical aspects of the implementation of a focus group. Checking all the items on this list will not guarantee a perfect focus group, but the discussions you have regarding each item will help you improve your project. Finally, the tool is not designed to be used alone - it is best discussed with a team.

### Clear Purpose

- Focus groups are a good choice to address the topics or issues of interest
- Focus groups will be connected to other aspects of the assessment project in a thoughtful manner (if applicable, e.g., exploratory or explanatory model)
- What we want to learn from the focus group is clear and specific, and will be useful to improve the program / service / department

### Identifying Participants

- The selected participants will best allow us to address or answer the topics or issues of interest
- Participants can be organized into groups that have some diversity, but not so much where participants will experience strong conflict or will be speaking in different domains
- Pre-existing group used where possible and reasonable
- Group size is planned for 4-7 (with some allowance for “over-recruitment”)

### Recruiting Participants

- Recruitment process develops commitment to attend, not just knowledge regarding the event
- Incentives are personalized encourage participation but are not excessive where participants would feel induced or required to participate
- Incentives are allowed given your institution’s and your department’s policies
- Multiple reminders and contacts are planned to decrease no-show rate
- Purpose of focus group and relevance is clearly explained to participants
- IRB approval is sought when appropriate

### **Prompts and Tasks**

- Start with an introduction to the focus group and establish norms
- If session is to be recorded, this is stated and use of recording process described
- A warm-up activity or discussion is planned to get the group comfortable with the topic and with each other
- Tasks or exercises are planned to encourage group interaction around the topic
- Prompts are open-ended, conversational, avoid jargon, and are in logical order
- Follow-up prompts are crafted in case the discussion falters
- Closing statement and thank-you planned

### **Implementing the Focus Group**

- An impartial facilitator is selected and assistant (for taking notes) is available
- Room setup encourages discussion and interaction
- Recording device (if using) has been tested and is operational
- Facilitator has plans for responding to bad behaviors or unexpected events (such as a participant storming out or a participant coming to tears)

### **Analysis and Reporting**

- If session was recorded, transcript is produced
- A thematic summary as well as essential quotes or takeaways are provided in the report
- Member-checking is performed (to verify the summary of the discussion with the participants)
- Findings are connected back to other aspects of the assessment project, if applicable