

**Betsy Mitchell, Ph.D.**

404-639-7836

[Bhm0@cdc.gov](mailto:Bhm0@cdc.gov)

For more information on focus group planning and implementation please go to:

<http://www.ora.gov/cdcynergy/cdcynergy30/default.htm>

---

## **Focus Groups— Key Activity Checklist**

### **1. Identify what you want to know or learn using this technique.**

<b>Focus Group Team Activities</b>	<b>Complete (✓)</b>	<b>Not Complete (X)</b>	<b>Required Actions</b>
<b>A. Assess if focus groups are the appropriate method for your data needs:</b> <u>Focus Groups</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❖ Do not allow the researcher to generalize findings to the rest of population</li><li>❖ Do not allow the researcher to get individualized responses</li><li>❖ Require financial and human resources</li></ul>			
<b>B. Set specific objectives for research</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❖ Write clear objective statement: “[insert = organization] wants to assess [list: attitudes, beliefs, behaviors] among [list: audience segment and location], over the next [give time frame for conducting research] in order to inform [indicate what this information will be used for]. <u>Selection of target audiences may be based on:</u><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Location/geography (urban rural residents)</li><li>• Occupation or community role (teachers, farmers, mothers, traditional leaders)</li><li>• Existing attitudes or behaviors in the context of the health issue</li><li>• The fact that they are the intended audience for a particular communication material or intervention</li></ul></li></ul>			
<b>C. As a team, list questions you would like to have answers to. Get feedback to questions from other stakeholders.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❖ Re-write them in the form of a focus group moderators guide (see Step 4)</li></ul>			

## 2. Identify the sampling frame. (who you want to talk to and where they are located)

Focus Group Team Activities	Complete (✓)	Not Complete (X)	Required Actions																
<p><b>A. Develop a sampling matrix</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Aim for 6-10 participants per focus group</li> <li>❖ Conduct at least 2 focus groups for each variable of interest (i.e. gender, social standing, ethnicity)</li> <li>❖ Avoid mixing one sub-group with another that might inhibit expression of opinion, e.g., Muslim men and women, high vs. low education.</li> <li>❖ Conduct focus groups in different geographic areas</li> <li>❖ Avoid compiling groups of people who know one another</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Example sampling matrix</i></p> <table border="1"> <tbody> <tr> <td colspan="2"><b>Urban Location:</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Language Group A</td> <td>Language Group B</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Men (2 groups)</td> <td>Men (2 groups)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Women ( 2 group)</td> <td>Women (2 groups)</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2"><b>Rural Location:</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Language Group A</td> <td>Language Group B</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Men (2 groups)</td> <td>Men (2 groups)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Women ( 2 group)</td> <td>Women (2 groups)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	<b>Urban Location:</b>		Language Group A	Language Group B	Men (2 groups)	Men (2 groups)	Women ( 2 group)	Women (2 groups)	<b>Rural Location:</b>		Language Group A	Language Group B	Men (2 groups)	Men (2 groups)	Women ( 2 group)	Women (2 groups)			
<b>Urban Location:</b>																			
Language Group A	Language Group B																		
Men (2 groups)	Men (2 groups)																		
Women ( 2 group)	Women (2 groups)																		
<b>Rural Location:</b>																			
Language Group A	Language Group B																		
Men (2 groups)	Men (2 groups)																		
Women ( 2 group)	Women (2 groups)																		

## 3. Select a moderator (discussion leader).

Focus Group Team Activities	Complete (✓)	Not Complete (X)	Required Actions
<p><b>A. Select a skilled moderator. (Key to success) Someone who is:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ A strong communicator</li> <li>❖ <u>Sensitive</u> and <u>respectful</u> in orientation</li> <li>❖ Can interpret verbal and non-verbal responses</li> </ul>			

❖ Speaks the same language as the participants (preferred)			
❖ A good listener and can manage lively group discussion			

#### 4. Create and Pre-test the moderator guide. (train the moderator and other staff)

Focus Group Team Activities	Complete (✓)	Not Complete (X)	Required Actions
<p><u>Moderator Guide:</u>  A. Write your research questions into the moderator guide as “probes” (questions written in a more conversational style) Guide should have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Introduction (welcome- consent- ice-breakers) ~ 5-10 minutes</li> <li>○ Focused discussion (around questions of interest) ~ 45 minutes</li> <li>○ Pre-test of communication concepts or materials (if desired) ~ 10-15 minutes</li> <li>○ Group closure- end, ask observers/note-takers if they have any questions ~ 5-10 minutes</li> </ul> <p><u>Moderator Training:</u>  A. Have the moderator <u>practice</u> using the guide with non-project team members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Have group sit in a circle</li> <li>○ Moderator should practice engaging widespread and equal participation</li> <li>○ Make sure all participants can see the moderator</li> <li>○ Verbal and non-verbal note-takers, translators can practice also</li> </ul> <p>B. Refine questions and length of the guide based on pre-test feedback (provide moderator feedback for self improvement)</p> <p><u>Other Team Members:</u>  May include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Logistics coordinator</li> <li>○ Participant recruiter</li> <li>○ Note-takers (verbal and non-verbal)</li> <li>○ Translator</li> <li>○ Data analyst</li> </ul> <p>Coordinate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How you will record the group discussion (Video-tape? Audiotape? Assign a note-</li> </ul>			

<p>taker?)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Any focus group observers (officials or guests with an interest in hearing the discussion)</li> <li>○ A team member to be a non-verbal note-taker (i.e. body language)</li> <li>○ Location where groups will be held (at a research facility? At a location where the target population congregates?)</li> <li>○ Obtain any approvals necessary to conduct the focus groups</li> <li>○ Identify any incentives needed for the participants (money, gifts)</li> </ul> <p><b>Moderator guide examples</b></p> <p><a href="http://www.abt.sliidea.org/dci/principals%20guide.pdf#search=%22focus%20group%20moderator%20guide%22">http://www.abt.sliidea.org/dci/principals%20guide.pdf#search=%22focus%20group%20moderator%20guide%22</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/cancer/cancers/colon/resources/crc_insuranceguide/individual_tools/Barriers_providers/Moderator_guide.doc">http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/cancer/cancers/colon/resources/crc_insuranceguide/individual_tools/Barriers_providers/Moderator_guide.doc</a></p>			
---	--	--	--

**5. Select the focus group location(s) and recruit the sample.**

<b>Focus Group Team Activities</b>	<b>Complete (✓)</b>	<b>Not Complete (X)</b>	<b>Required Actions</b>
<p>A. Develop a <u>schedule</u> for the focus groups to include date, time, location and population (from sampling matrix). Outline roles and responsibilities for the team in this matrix as well.</p> <p>Identify specific locations to have the focus groups. Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Are the locations easy for participants to get to?</li> <li>○ Are they being conducted at a convenient time of day?</li> <li>○ Is the physical space being used as quiet and private as possible?</li> </ul> <p>B. <b>Recruit participants</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 6- 10 participants</li> <li>○ Based on sampling strategy</li> <li>○ Utilize community contacts to assist in recruitment if appropriate</li> <li>○ Allow ~ 2 weeks</li> <li>○ Offer incentives to participate as appropriate</li> </ul>			

## 6. Conduct the focus groups.

Focus Group Team Activities	Complete (✓)	Not Complete (X)	Required Actions
<p>A. Conduct each focus group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ After each focus group, <u>project team</u> should debrief and summarize the focus group responses (to include non-verbal observations, environmental influences)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ As a project team, discuss and document what participants said for each question (write it up as a summary report)</li> <li>○ Also note any other observations of interest (areas for improvement)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>			

## 7. Analyze, interpret and share findings.

Focus Group Team Activities	Complete (✓)	Not Complete (X)	Required Actions
<p>A. Analyze and interpret findings.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ If the focus groups were audio taped, get a transcription of the discussion</li> <li>❖ Conduct an analysis of the transcript and note-taker's notes               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Decide, based on your research objectives, how you wish to organize the analysis and reporting of the focus group data, i.e. findings by location (urban/rural)? Findings by issue or by question?</li> <li>○ Look for emerging themes in the text discussion</li> <li>○ Look for group consensus or dissenting views</li> <li>○ Look for degree of conviction in responses</li> <li>○ Capture any key similarities in groups or notable differences</li> </ul> </li> <li>❖ Write a report including: executive summary, introduction, methodology, results, conclusions (implications)</li> </ul> <p>B. Share findings.</p> <p><b>Focus Group report examples</b>  <a href="http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/prof/heart/latino/focusgrp.pdf">http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/prof/heart/latino/focusgrp.pdf</a>  <a href="http://www.governmentontheweb.org/downloads/citizen_redress/Report-on-four-focus-groups.pdf#search=%22focus%20group%20report%22">http://www.governmentontheweb.org/downloads/citizen_redress/Report-on-four-focus-groups.pdf#search=%22focus%20group%20report%22</a></p>			

**What next? Develop an action plan based on your findings.**

### **Moderator guide examples**

<http://www.abt.sliidea.org/dci/principals%20guide.pdf#search=%22focus%20group%20moderator%20guide%22>

[http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/cancer/cancers/colon/resources/crc\\_insuranceguide/individual\\_tools/Barriers\\_providers/Moderator\\_guide.doc](http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/cancer/cancers/colon/resources/crc_insuranceguide/individual_tools/Barriers_providers/Moderator_guide.doc)