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# FOCUS GROUP PLANNING WORKSHEET

Focus groups are a great way to collect narrative data on your program. This worksheet is designed to help you map out a plan for conducting a basic focus group with young people or other stakeholders.

## THE BASICS

- **Where and how will your focus group take place?** Will it be in person or online? If in person, how will you arrange the space? Will participants work in small groups? Will they move around? Will you offer food?
- **Who will participate in your focus group?** Will it be young people? Families? Staff members? Will you try to recruit people with certain characteristics (e.g. young people who have been in your program for multiple years; families who have attended evening events), or will you aim for a diverse group?
- **Who will conduct the focus group?** Think about how you will cover different roles. Who will ask the questions? Who will take notes? Will you record the conversation?

## GETTING STARTED

- **How will you introduce the focus group?** Let participants know who you are and why you are conducting the focus group. If you are recording, let participants know what you will do with the information you collect, and how you will protect their privacy. Ensure that you have permissions in place for both youth and adult participants.
- **How will you welcome participants to the space?** Consider a warm-up activity to help participants get comfortable. At minimum, facilitate a short icebreaker that allows participants to introduce themselves in a low-pressure way.
- **What are your ground rules?** Take some time to go over community norms and ground rules. Will you use an established speaking order? Can participants decline to answer certain questions? How will you handle disagreements or conflicts that arise?

## THE QUESTIONS

Generally speaking, the questions you ask should progress from simple and straightforward to more complex and challenging. Use the space below to note questions of the following types: objective, reflective, interpretive, and decisional.

## OBJECTIVE QUESTIONS

These questions are essentially factual, and are intended to get everyone speaking early. Make these questions easy to answer (e.g. How did you first hear about this program?) and then take time to allow all participants to take turns answering them.

## REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

These questions ask participants to reflect on their emotional responses to their experiences in your program. These questions should be fairly general and open-ended (e.g. What are some things that you like about this program? How do you describe this program to your friends or family?)

## INTERPRETIVE QUESTIONS

These questions require a bit more thought. They invite participants to make meaning of their individual experiences (e.g. What are some things that you learned during your time in this program? What are some ways you have grown as a person?).

## DECISIONAL QUESTIONS

These questions probe participants to come to collective agreement about future direction (e.g. Thinking about your future, what are some ways you will be different because of the time you spent here? What could we have done to make things even better for you?)

### TIP: THINK ABOUT ALTERNATIVE ACTIVITIES

What are some activities you can use to increase engagement in the focus group experience? Consider having participants select or draw an image that reflects their experience in the program and explain it. Or have them write their thoughts on chart paper, or pair up to talk through questions that they then share back to the group. Be creative, and remember that not everyone is comfortable speaking in front of a group.

## THE CLOSING

This is a good place to ask final questions (e.g. What else should we have asked about today? What else would you like to share?) and to let participants know what you will do with the information they have provided.