



# Activity 3.4: Preparing for a Focus Group

## Materials Needed

Butcher Paper  
Markers  
Butcher Paper with list of Research Goals and Research Questions

## Key Terms

Focus Group  
Focus Group Guide  
Facilitator  
Qualitative Data

## Time Needed

1 Hour

## Purpose of Activity

This activity is designed to educate participants about the basics of focus groups, focus group guides, and how to devise effective focus group questions.

## By the End of Activity Participants Will

- Learn the basics of setting up and conducting focus groups
- Develop questions for a focus group guide

## Before this Activity Participants Will Need to

Have determined your research goals and research questions  
Have decided on your research method

## Part I: Background on Focus Groups (30 minutes)

### What is a Focus Group?

#### Facilitator Instructions

1. Go around the room and ask people what they know about focus groups. Write answers on butcher paper.
2. Compare what people came up with, with the definition below. Make sure each piece of the definition is covered.

#### Focus Group Definition

A focus group is a guided discussion, led by a well-prepared facilitator where the participants will answer a set of questions. Focus groups are generally recorded and the answers that the participants provide are used as qualitative data in a final report. Qualitative data are stories or in depth ideas about a topic, rather than numbers and statistics.

3. Next have participants brainstorm goals for focus groups and record their responses on butcher paper, add any of the goals below that were missed.

#### Focus Group Goals

- To collect in depth ideas and explanations from a specific group of people;
  - To have participants answer a specific set of questions to gather qualitative data;
  - To collect clear recordings or notes of the focus groups that can be transcribed and then analyzed;
  - To deepen the engagement of focus group participants in the research process and the organization's campaigns.
4. Split participants into small groups of 3-4.
  5. Ask each small group to think of benefits and challenges of using focus groups to gather data. Make sure each group records their list on butcher paper and is prepared to share it with the rest of the group.



6. Have each small group share their list benefits and challenges with the big group.
7. Compare the list of benefits and challenges with those listed in the Tool 3.7 Benefits and Challenges of Using Focus Groups for additional ideas.

## Part II. Developing Focus Group Questions (30 minutes)

### Facilitator Instructions

1. Introduce the activity: the purpose of this activity is to provide information about how to develop good questions for a focus group guide. Let the participants know that by the end of the activity they will have brainstormed questions for your Focus Group Guide.
  2. Describe what a Focus Group Guide is:  
  
**Focus Group Guide:** is a guided set of questions, organized into sections that will help the facilitator to lead the discussion and ensure that he/she is able to collect the information needed for the research project. The guide should help the facilitator to stay on topic but should not be used as a word for word script.
  3. Explain: before you brainstorm questions for your focus group guide, you are going to review some tips about what makes a good question for a focus group. Review the tips below and post them somewhere in the room for participants to refer to later.
4. Next refresh participants on the goals of your project/campaign, research questions, and who will participate in your focus group. Post this information on butcher paper so participants can refer back to them as needed.
  5. Next ask the group to brainstorm categories of questions for your focus group, based on your research goals and questions provide one example to start the discussion (For example, if your research is focused on public housing, one section of category of questions could be about policing and another about repairs).
  6. After the brainstorm, sum up what was said and create 3-4 categories for questions.
  7. Split participants into small groups. Give each group a different category.
  8. Ask each small group to designate a facilitator to lead the discussion and take notes. Give each small group pen and paper and ask them to brainstorm questions for the focus group for their category.
  9. Come back together as a big group and ask each group to share their questions. Record them on butcher paper.
  10. Explain that these questions can be used to develop your focus group guide.
  11. After the training, type the questions and use as a starting point for your focus group guide (see Tool 3.9 for a sample focus group guide).

### Good Questions for Focus Groups...

- Are open-ended
- Sound conversational
- Are easy to say
- Are clear and simple
- Are short and to the point
- Include clear directions