

# Planting Seeds for Success- FULL Focus Groups

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# Goals for Today



In this presentation we will cover:



1. What focus groups are and how they can help your library engage community members
2. Tools and tips for designing focus groups and gathering participants
3. Skills for conducting inclusive, traumainformed focus groups

**Have you ever hosted a  
focus group for your  
library before?**

If so, feel free to share about it in the chat





# Digging in: Focus Groups and their Value

- Focus groups consist of several selected participants that partake in an intentional conversation directed by a moderator in order to gather community input.
- They are used to answer open ended questions, share diverse perspectives, and foster creativity and discussion.

For example –  
conducting focus groups  
to engage caregivers  
with children’s summer  
program planning



# Planning with Purpose



- **A symbiotic relationship** - participants get to voice their input, and you gain knowledge and insight on what they value
- Involve the community and foster collaboration early in your research with focus groups
- Prevent unforeseen pitfalls in your planning before it is too late
- Ensure you are asking the right questions as you move forward

# When NOT to Conduct Focus Groups




- If you are not able to incorporate any suggestions you may receive
- You are trying to apply your findings to a much larger population
- The topics are sensitive and personal
- If you don't have the time to do it right

**For what purpose would  
you host a focus group  
for your library?**

Please share your answers in the chat





# Design Tools and Tips: Recruiting Participants

- Be intentional and try to utilize existing partnerships and connections in the community
- Consider barriers to the discussion such as the power structures that may influence the conversation
- Try to gather 4-8 people
- Offer incentives
- Make sure participants can give informed consent








# Ground Rules

- Introductions
- Set the tone
- Explain the project
- Ask participants to speak to each other, not only to the moderator
- Speak, listen, and act respectfully



**Do you have plans to  
host a focus group for  
your library in the  
future?**



# Cultivating Your Questions

- Question structure is key
  - Don't overcomplicate questions
  - Ask follow up questions
  - Be creative (reflections, examples, ratings, or even drawings could be included)
- Have a designated note taker
- Record it
- Be considerate of everyone's time



# How can you ensure your participants feel comfortable?

Please place your suggestions in the chat.



# Fostering a Safe Sharing Environment



- Demonstrate verbal and nonverbal listening cues
- Ask for clarification before assuming what someone means
- Be flexible if important, unanticipated points arise
- Exemplify confidence
- Stay neutral
- Always be respectful of differing opinions
- Try to give everyone an equal chance to share
- Avoid leading questions
- Steer the conversation back on topic if it goes astray



# The Challenges

Consider potential problems and prepare your response beforehand.

- Experts / dominant talkers
- Shy participants
- Ramblers
- Groupthink

Practice!





# A Trauma - Informed Lens

- Host your focus group in a safe, friendly space
- Be transparent
- Have empathy and respect
- Offer connections and resources



**Are there any other  
experiences or thoughts you  
would like to share?**

If you have participated in a focus group before you can raise your hand  
or share about your experience in the chat.



# Questions?

Thank you!



# Resources

[https://www.eiu.edu/ihec/Krueger - FocusGroupInterviews.pdf](https://www.eiu.edu/ihec/Krueger-FocusGroupInterviews.pdf)

[https://researchdesignreview.com/2020/02/16/focus - groups - heterogeneity - vs - homogeneity/](https://researchdesignreview.com/2020/02/16/focus-groups-heterogeneity-vs-homogeneity/)

[https://learningspacetoolkit.org/needs - assessment/data-gathering - tools - 2/focus-groups-things-to-consider/index.html](https://learningspacetoolkit.org/needs-assessment/data-gathering-tools-2/focus-groups-things-to-consider/index.html)

## LRS Resources

[https://www.lrs.org/2022/06/15/reading - and - recording - the - room - focus - groups/](https://www.lrs.org/2022/06/15/reading-and-recording-the-room-focus-groups/)

[https://www.lrs.org/2022/07/07/planting - seeds - for - success - full - focus - groups/](https://www.lrs.org/2022/07/07/planting-seeds-for-success-full-focus-groups/)

[https://www.lrs.org/2021/08/18/nothing - about - us - without - us - equitable - evaluation - through - community - engagement/](https://www.lrs.org/2021/08/18/nothing-about-us-without-us-equitable-evaluation-through-community-engagement/)

[https://www.lrs.org/2022/07/28/a - trauma - informed - lens - communities - libraries - and - research/](https://www.lrs.org/2022/07/28/a-trauma-informed-lens-communities-libraries-and-research/)