

FOCUS GROUP TRAINING

SPRING 2024

Student Affairs
Student Life Analytics
Texas Christian University

Objectives

By the end of this workshop, you will:

- ▣ Understand the rationale and purpose of focus groups;
- ▣ Identify the steps involved in conducting focus groups;



When is a Focus Group appropriate?

- ❑ Collecting opinions, beliefs, and attitudes about issues of interest
- ❑ Checking out assumptions
- ❑ Seeking deeper level of understanding about a topic; explain the numbers
- ❑ Encouraging discussion about a particular topic
- ❑ Building excitement about a topic; create a “buzz”
- ❑ Build rapport

A Focus Group is NOT

- ▣ A debate
- ▣ Group therapy
- ▣ A conflict resolution session
- ▣ A problem solving session
- ▣ An educational session
- ▣ A 'sales' session

Conducting a Focus Group - Overview

- ▣ Define the Purpose
- ▣ Establish a Timeline
- ▣ Identify & Invite Participants
- ▣ Generate the Questions
- ▣ Generate a Script
- ▣ Select Facilitators
- ▣ Choose the Location
- ▣ Conduct the Focus Group
- ▣ Interpret & Report Results
- ▣ Translate Results Into Action

Conducting a Focus Group – Define the Purpose

- ▣ Develop a clear, specific purpose statement in order to develop the right questions and elicit the best information.
 - After writing an initial statement, ask “Why do we want to know that?”
 - Clearer, more refined w/each iteration
- ▣ Benefits
 - Explain rationale to group
 - Recruit participants more successfully

Conducting a Focus Group – Establish a Timeline

- ▣ Don't wait until the last minute to plan
 - Minimum of four weeks out
 - Realistic: six to eight weeks
- ▣ Make/use a checklist or project management software
 - Outlook has capacity
 - Other programs available in Microsoft Suite

Conducting a Focus Group – Typical Timeline

- ▣ Write purpose statement 6-8 wks
- ▣ Identify participants 6-8 wks
- ▣ Gather contact information 6-8 wks
- ▣ Select facilitators 5-7 wks
- ▣ Develop questions 5-7 wks
- ▣ Develop script 5-7 wks
- ▣ Select/reserve session site 4-6 wks
- ▣ Initial participation invite 4-6 wks

Conducting a Focus Group – Typical Timeline

- ▣ Make room arrangements 4-6 wks
- ▣ Follow-up participation invite 2-4 wks
- ▣ Facilitator Training/rehearsal 2-4 wks
- ▣ Final follow-up invitation 1-3 wks
- ▣ Prepare paperwork (consent, etc.) 1-3 wks
- ▣ Conduct Focus Group
- ▣ Thank participants 0-1 wks
- ▣ Transcribe, Analyze, Report 4-6 wks

Conducting a Focus Group – Identify & Invite Participants

- ▣ Five stage process
 - Determine how many participants you need and how many to invite
 - Review purpose to develop key list of participant attributes
 - Brainstorm possible participants/participant categories; homogeneous w/in group
 - Refine list
 - Secure names & contact information, finalize list, send invitation

Conducting a Focus Group – Generate Questions

- ▣ Generate five to six questions
 - First two are really warm-up questions
 - Three to four to probe research issue
- ▣ Sequence and tone important
 - Move from general to more specific
- ▣ Should be open-ended
- ▣ Brainstorm questions
 - Refine based on purpose statement
 - Eliminate/combine like questions
 - Narrow down list

Conducting a Focus Group – Generate Questions

- ▣ Edit and rewrite questions
- ▣ Arrange and order questions
 - Order should be progressive
 - ▣ Comfortable for participants to answer
 - ▣ General to specific
 - ▣ Easy to challenging
 - ▣ Positive to negative
- ▣ Test questions
- ▣ Revise as needed

Conducting a Focus Group – Example Questions

Questions for a Focus Group on Dental Flossing

Engagement Questions:

1. What is your favorite toothpaste?
2. What do you notice when you look at other people's teeth?

Exploration Questions:

3. Who in particular has influenced your dental habits?
4. What are the pros and cons of flossing your teeth?
5. When you floss your teeth, how do you follow through? And when you don't floss, what prevents you?
6. How do you feel when told about possible damage that could occur by not flossing?
7. How do you feel about yourself when you floss regularly? What about when you don't floss?

Exit Questions:

8. Is there anything else you would like to say about why you do or do not floss your teeth on a regular basis?

Note: Flossers and Non-flossers in separate groups.

Conducting a Focus Group – Generate Script

- ▣ Puts questions in context for participants
- ▣ Ensures consistency between groups
 - Validity & reliability
- ▣ Helps facilitators stay on track

Conducting a Focus Group – Generate Script

- ▣ First Period/Pre-game {20 minutes}
 - Welcome participants to group; Introduce purpose
 - Paperwork (consent, etc)
 - Define parameters (what to expect);
 - Option to not participate
 - Participant introductions
- ▣ Second Period/Game {45 minutes}
 - Questions
- ▣ Third Period/Post-game {20 minutes}
 - Thank participants
 - Provide avenue for unsolicited comments
 - Provide information for result acquisition

Conducting a Focus Group – Introductory Script

WELCOME:

Thanks for agreeing to be a part of this focus group. We appreciate your willingness to participate.

INTRODUCTION:

Facilitator, Assistant Facilitator, then Group Members

PURPOSE:

This focus group is sponsored by _____. The reason we are conducting these groups is to explore _____. We need your input and want you to share your honest and open thoughts with us.

GROUND RULES:

We want you to do the talking. We want everyone to participate, so if I notice you aren't talking, I may call on you. There are no right or wrong answers. Every person's experience and opinions are valid and important. In fact, the whole point of this exercise is to give you a chance to tell us about your personal experience. We want you to feel comfortable and we want to respect your experience, so let's agree that what is said in this session, stays in this session. To ensure that we capture everything that is expressed here, we may be taping the conversation or taking notes. When the report is written, however, your identity will not be noted. Your identity will remain confidential. Any questions?

Conducting a Focus Group – Select Facilitators

- ▣ Skillful facilitation of group
 - Deal tactfully with difficult participants
 - Keep discussion on track
 - Make sure every participant is heard
- ▣ Co-facilitation is most effective
 - Sit opposite each other
 - Recorder, if not taping
- ▣ Choose facilitator with group participants in mind

Conducting a Focus Group – Choose Location

▣ Setting Questions

- What message does room send?
- Does setting encourage conversation?
- Will setting bias information offered?
- Can setting accommodate 10-12 people where all can view each other?
- Is location accessible?
- Is location appropriate for participants?

Conducting a Focus Group – Conduct Focus Group

- ▣ Materials needed checklist
 - Have one
- ▣ Follow script but follow leads
 - Semi-structured interview
 - Seem natural & spontaneous
- ▣ Facilitators should arrive before participants
- ▣ Room should be set up prior
 - Refreshments, chair arrangement, paperwork
- ▣ As participants arrive, facilitators should set the tone
 - Welcoming and Cordial

Conducting a Focus Group – Consent Form

Consent to Participate in Focus Group

- **Purpose:** You have been asked to participate in a focus group sponsored by the Student Life Analytics Department at TCU. The purpose of the group is to try and understand why some students do not buy their textbooks. The information learned in this focus group will be used by administrators at TCU to inform policies and practices regarding textbook acquisition.
- **Procedure:** As part of this study, you will be placed in a group of 6 – 12 individuals. A facilitator will ask you several questions related to the topic. This focus group will be audio-recorded and a note-taker will be present. However, your responses will remain confidential, and no names will be included in the final report. Please note that there are no right or wrong answers to focus group questions. We want to hear everyone's viewpoint and would like for everyone to contribute their thoughts. Out of respect, please refrain from interrupting others. However, feel free to be honest even when your responses counter those of other group members.
- **Benefits and Risks:** Your participation may benefit you and others by helping us explore creative ways to make textbooks more accessible to all students. Also, no risks are anticipated beyond those experienced during an average conversation.

Conducting a Focus Group – Consent Form

Consent to Participate in Focus Group

- **Confidentiality:** Your participation in this focus group is voluntary and you may choose to stop participating at any time without any negative repercussions or consequences. Should you choose to participate, you will be asked to respect the privacy of other focus group members by not disclosing any content discussed during the study. Although this focus group is being recorded, your individual responses will not be associated with your personal identity in the final report. The recorded session will be deleted or destroyed within seven (7) days of the final report being submitted.
- **Contact:** If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, please contact Dr. Angela D. Taylor at (817) 257-6454 or a.d.taylor@tcu.edu or 015 Samuelson Hall.

I understand this information and agree to participate fully under the conditions stated above.

Print Name: _____

Date: _____

Sign Name: _____

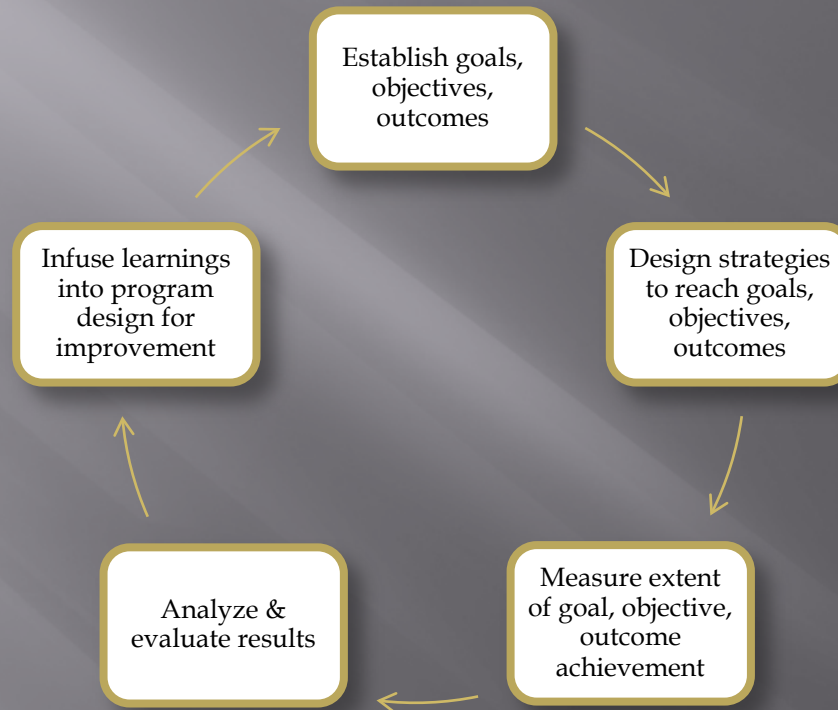
Conducting a Focus Group – Conduct Focus Group

- ▣ Keep in Mind
 - Set the tone
 - Participants should have fun and feel good about their participation
 - Make sure every participant is heard
 - Get full answers
 - Follow-up to clarify or get specifics
 - Don't assume you know to what participant is referring
 - Free flow discussion within question
 - Monitor time closely
 - Keep discussion on track
 - Head off exchanges of opinion that escalate

Conducting a Focus Group – Interpret & Report Results

- ▣ Summarize each group
 - Facilitators summarize as soon as possible at conclusion of group
- ▣ Transcribe tapes
- ▣ Analyze summaries & transcriptions
- ▣ Write report

Conducting a Focus Group – Translate Results Into Action



- ❑ Develop action plan based on what you have learned
- ❑ Implement action plan
- ❑ Evaluate to determine effectiveness of actions implemented

Conclusion

Review objectives:

- ▣ **Understand the rationale and purpose of focus groups;**
- ▣ **Identify the steps involved in conducting focus groups.**

Questions/Comments?

THANK YOU!

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