

Focus Groups

A focus group is a guided, small-group interview that uses group interaction to elicit information from group members. You need a skilled facilitator and experienced note taker to generate useful results. Focus group data provides insights into the attitude, perceptions, and opinions of the group participants. Focus groups are not for developing consensus or for finalizing a plan. The group dynamics in a focus group tend to generate more ideas than individual interviews. A focus group, or a series of focus groups, is useful in gathering details regarding opinions and perceptions found through other techniques.

See the “Using focus groups to collect useful information” handout for tips on focus groups.

If your team would like to conduct focus group interviews and you don't have an experienced facilitator on the team, then consider a local community college, state college or university, or public relations firm. These organizations might have resources and/or staff with experience and expertise in conducting focus groups.

The resources listed below can also provide you with the specifics of conducting focus group interviews.

1. Betts NM, et al. Recommendations for Planning and Reporting Focus Group Research. *J of Nutr Edu.* 1996; 28:279-281.
2. Krueger R and Casey MA. *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research.* Third edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications; 2000.
3. Morgan DL, ed. *Successful Focus Groups: Advancing the State of the Art.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications; 1993.
4. National Cancer Institute. *Making Health Communications Programs Work.* NIH Publication No. 02-5145. Bethesda, MD: US Department of Health and Human Services; 2002. Available on CD-ROM or at: www.cancer.gov/pinkbook