

How to: MAKING FOCUS GROUPS CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY APPROPRIATE

Focus groups are a useful research strategy to elicit knowledge, experiences and feedback from consumers and communities from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. Factoring relevant cultural and linguistic considerations into focus group planning and implementation is critical for success. This resource outlines an approach to focus groups which involves using bilingual facilitators with a group of participants with a common language and cultural background.

Before You Begin

- Use preferred language or dialect, ethnicity and cultural background to identify the participants you want to target. These characteristics will also need to be shared with the facilitator that you select.
- Identify what resources you can access to assist you. These might include bilingual workers in your organisation, demographic data on CALD communities, partnerships with ethno-specific and community organisations, community leaders, networks, existing research and funding opportunities.
- Plan for how you will incorporate diversity variables such as gender, age, English language proficiency, participants' literacy in their preferred language and English, education, migration history, refugee and settlement experiences and acculturation issues into the group composition. These may have an impact on group dynamics, participation levels and research outcomes.
- Be familiar with the levels of community infrastructure and existing networks in your selected target group. This could influence how you approach the community and how you recruit facilitators and participants.
- Establish how much funding is available to support the participation of both facilitators and participants. Reimbursement for the contribution of the community is important.

Recruiting and Supporting Facilitators

- Locate the most appropriate bilingual facilitator. They could be sourced from your organisation, from ethno-specific or community organisations or from the community.
- Where no experienced facilitators are available, be prepared to provide professional development, mentoring and support. This could include facilitation training, briefings, relevant literature or resources.
- Facilitators need good interpersonal skills to support interaction between participants.

Recruiting Participants

- Work with the facilitator to recruit participants for the focus group that meet the purposes of the research. It is important to establish rapport and trust in order to elicit participants' understanding of the purpose of the focus group and to gain their consent and full participation.
- Ensure participants receive oral and written information in their preferred language indicating the purpose, size of the group, how it will work, permission to record the discussions, potential outcomes, uses and ownership of information, a confidentiality clause, a consent form which includes the withdrawal of consent, the feedback process and how reimbursement will occur.

How to:

MAKING FOCUS GROUPS CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY APPROPRIATE *continued ...*

Interpreting and Translations

- Interpreters can be utilised to interpret the proceedings of the group for workers who do not speak the language it is being conducted in. Bilingual facilitators should not undertake this role in addition to facilitation.
- Identify actual costs for professional interpreting and translations including total hours for the following:
 - Translation of forms, letters and transcripts
 - Interpreting for other workers

Focus Group Facilitation

- Give facilitators the opportunity to test questions and rework them for cultural appropriateness prior to conducting focus groups.
- It is important for the facilitator to explain the group process to participants at the outset, including any information that has been communicated previously.
- Consider how cultural differences are expressed through different communication styles such as attitudes towards conflict, approaches to completing tasks, decision making styles, attitudes towards disclosure and confidentiality and issues of individual or group rights. These may affect the group process and outcomes.
- It may be culturally relevant to take time to establish a rapport or it could be more appropriate to get straight down to business.
- Ensure culturally appropriate food and refreshments are available.
- The facilitator also needs to:
 - Brief other workers on specific cultural protocols.
 - Exercise empathy for pre-migration and or refugee experiences.
 - Understand that participants may have little or no previous experience in consumer participation processes.
 - Avoid acronyms and jargon.
 - Allow extra time for interpreting and scribing.

Verifying and Disseminating Information to Participants

- Re-convene the focus group to verify the documented information and to check the areas of recommendation. This is particularly important to ensure the integrity of the participants' input.
- Communicate how recommendations will be actioned in the community.
- Make the recommendations, results or the executive summary available to the participants in the relevant community language(s) and in a timely manner to enhance relationship building with the community.
- Identify a range of ways of disseminating the focus group outcomes such as through ethnic media, ethno-specific or community organisations and community venues.
- If you are launching the findings ensure participants are invited and interpreters are available.