

TOOL 18 – HOW TO ORGANIZE A FOCUS GROUP MEETING?

1. What Are Focus Group Meetings?

Focus group meetings are small-group discussions used to assess public opinion on a specific topic or issue. Focus groups consist of carefully selected individuals who either possess specific knowledge and interest in a particular topic or are randomly chosen representatives of the general public. This approach is useful for exploring attitudes in greater depth at the start of a project, as well as for shaping future understanding of the project. It can also provide a safe and timely environment for the participation of underrepresented groups. It is often used as a supplement to other public engagement methods.

2. Reasons to Use Focus Groups:

- Feedback is detailed and valuable – participants can provide in-depth and informative responses.
- Encourages open and honest discussion – participants feel more comfortable in a smaller, controlled setting.
- Not everyone feels comfortable sharing opinions at large public events – smaller, more private environments allow for easier expression of views.
- Allows for deeper exploration of specific issues – provides enough time for thorough consideration and engagement on selected topics.

3. How to Organize a Focus Group?

- Prepare a set of questions to be asked to participants. The questions should align with the engagement objectives and research topic.
- Prepare a comfortable meeting space where participants can relax and freely express their opinions.
- Begin with a brief introduction and explain the basic rules of discussion (e.g. active listening, allowing others to finish their thoughts before responding).
- Encourage discussion while ensuring that all participants have an equal opportunity to speak and contribute.
- Prepare a report summarizing key findings that emerged from participant discussions.

4. Where and When to Use Focus Groups:

This method can be used with specific participant groups or with different interest groups such as children, teenagers, business owners, or commercial tenants, etc. Conducted in small groups, this facilitated discussion allows for exploring issues, measuring stakeholder attitudes, and generating ideas that may not be immediately apparent.

Accessibility:

This activity is not suitable for online engagement as it relies on group discussion and requires the physical presence of participants.

Infrastructure:

- A quiet meeting room that allows for focus and uninterrupted discussion.
- A table and chairs arranged for comfort and practicality.
- Props that help create a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere, such as note-taking materials or visual aids to guide the discussion.
- Audio or video recording.