

1. DEVELOP MODERATOR'S GUIDE

- Ensure all questions are related to the key research questions.
- Ensure questions are clear and specific for your target participants (i.e. women/men).
- Include no more than five different topics for your focus group discussion.
- Aim for less than 15 specific questions in total (an average of three questions per topic area).
- Use open-ended questions: *"What did you like most about the workshop?"*
- Plan probing questions: *"How appropriate was the format for this training topic?"*
- Clarify concepts to be explored: *"By format, we mean the workshop agenda and structure."*
- Avoid "yes/no" questions: Ask, *"To what extent did the workshop meet your expectations?"* Rather than, *"Did the workshop meet your expectations?"*
- End with closure questions: *"What are the key lessons we should take away from this discussion?"*
- Pretest the moderator's guide and refine it before the first focus group; refine it again after first group.
- Translate the guide into the local language(s), if necessary.

2. CREATE A SAFE CLIMATE

- If you are meeting outdoors, make sure the location is quiet enough to stay focused on the discussion.
- Make sure that all participants fit the criteria for each focus group (e.g., they all have attended the same training activity).
- Set up any refreshments in an unobtrusive corner or outside the room.
- Introduce everybody who is in the group; note-taker, co-moderator, etc.
- Have each participant fill out both sides of a name tent and place it at an angle, so that everyone around the table can see. Learn each person's name and use it to develop the relationship between you and group members.
- Give ground rules for the group (e.g., talking one at a time, listen and speak with respect, no one speaks for the whole group, cell phones off, no smoking, etc.).

3. RECORD AND TAKE NOTES

- Use a structured note-taking template and enter notes (either handwritten or typed into a laptop) under the appropriate heading for each question. Review and revise notes within 24 hours to enhance accuracy.
- After respondents have left the interview, debrief the session with colleagues and ask, “What did we learn from this group?”
- Be aware of where you have written down your notes from the session and whether there is any identifying information for groups/individuals on it. Only keep what you need for as long as you need it.

4. BE A GOOD MODERATOR

- First and foremost, be a good listener!
- Try to under-moderate rather than over-moderate.
- Create an opportunity for ice-breaking. Ask people to introduce themselves with information that will help you understand their comments.
- Avoid asking participants to “go around the table” to answer any question. Participants may contribute whenever they wish to do so.
- Notice who is included and who participates. Use direct hooks (“How about you?”) and indirect hooks (“How about this side of the table?”) to engage participation.
- Help participants talk to each other, not to you.
- Respond positively to a person's initial attempts to communicate and invite further contributions; this will affect whether (s)he will risk contributing again.
- Use non-verbal cues to engage participants in discussion; use eye contact and hand movement – be the music conductor. Use eye contact to involve those that aren't as active in the discussion.