



Immigrant and Minority Focus Groups: *Tips for Training Moderators and Writing the Final Report*

Focus groups provide the opportunity for researchers to gather rich, qualitative information that may not be accessible through traditional survey mechanisms. The following suggestions for training moderators and writing a final report provides some general guidelines and considerations for states as they move through the focus group process of collecting information about health insurance.

Training Moderators: While moderators may come from within the research group conducting the study, in many cases, particularly with special population groups, a moderator from outside the research organization is selected. Providing a detailed training session is the safest route to ensuring that moderators understand the expectations placed upon them and are fully engaged in the focus group progress.

Suggestions areas for training include:

- Lay out expectation of the moderator (e.g. practice introduction and be comfortable with questions; arrive early; test equipment; assist with paperwork and logistical details; begin and conclude on time; monitor time to make sure all questions are asked; use designated probes; hold back own opinions and discuss/review key findings with all moderators and note takers at the end of the focus group).
- Lay out expectations for the note-taker (arrange room so that everyone can see each other; welcome participants and introduce them to each other; sit opposite the moderator and close to the door in order to greet late comers; take notes; monitor recording equipment; control own non-verbal actions; ask questions when invited; summarize focus group input; check tape at end of meeting; debrief with moderator and go through main themes, important quotes, etc.)
- Provide and practice sample introduction to the focus group discussion.
- Go through questions and discuss meaning behind them.

Arrange logistics of meeting: The logistics may include confirming the date and time of the meeting, as well as the location, including parking. Make sure to notify participants of the date and time. Depending on the time of day, you may want to provide refreshments. Additionally, cash or incentives should be considered, and any copies of written materials you'd like to distribute.

Possible items to bring to the focus group include: flipchart with paper and markers; tape-recorder and microphone; tapes, batteries and extension cord; name tents and markers; paper and pens; copies of materials to be distributed; incentives in individual envelopes; 2 copies of questions and a notepad for the note-taker; list of participants with addresses and phone numbers; refreshments and plates; and a clock.

Analysis and Write Up: The following outline is an example of what may be included in a focus group written report.[1]

1. *Executive Summary:* A concise summary of focus group goals and findings. Recommendations may also be included in this section. Should be written to capture message of report, regardless of whether or not audience reads entire report.
2. *Purpose and Procedures:* Include a description of the study's purpose as well as a brief description of the study. May include details such as the number of groups, types of people included as participants, and where the groups were held.
3. *Results or Findings:* In many reports, results are organized around key themes and concepts. Items included in this section are based on what was said in the focus group, not on the interpretation of the researcher.
4. *Conclusions/Summary:* This section may take many forms. Some researchers may choose to present their own interpretations of the focus group results, others may draw together themes and come to an overall conclusion.
5. *Recommendations:* An optional section that provides next steps or suggestions for policy considerations, future research, etc.
6. *Appendix:* The appendix is optional but may include items such as the questions asked, the community organization involved in an advisory group, etc.

1. **Krueger, R.A. and M.A. Casey, *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research*. 3rd ed. 2000, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.**