



Organizing a Focus Group or Community Consultation

1. Select a date and location.
2. Develop invitations/communications to publicize the event, including contact and RSVP information.
3. Send any background materials to participants and/or prepare materials that will be given to participants.
4. Develop a facilitator's guide that will include questions and specific timeframes that the facilitator will follow to keep everything on track and focused.
5. Develop an evaluation form to give to participants.
6. Confirm final numbers and order any catering.
7. Conduct the focus group or community consultation.
8. Summarize feedback received and evaluation results.
9. Follow up with participants about the results of the consultation and any next steps.

Tips

- Clearly articulate the overall purpose or goal of the consultation. People need to know why you have asked them to participate.
- Ask people to introduce themselves so everyone knows who is in the room.
- Explain how the consultation will work—time frames, confidentiality, asking questions, etc.
- Ask permission before using tape recorders or cameras.
- Provide logistical information such as washroom locations, refreshments, etc.
- Try to involve all participants in the discussion.
- Thank participants for their input.
- Provide participants with proceedings of the meeting and next steps.

Creating Buy-in and Dealing with Push-back

- One of the best ways to create buy-in is to provide opportunities for people to be engaged in the process and give their feedback. When you ask people for their feedback and they see it reflected, they have a vested interest in the results and have a greater tendency to be supportive.
- Conducting both focus groups and consultations is a great way to create acceptance for your idea or a change you would like to make. By engaging others, you develop a team that wants your project to succeed, helping you deal with any resistance.
- If people continue to push-back, invite them into the consultation process and express how important their thoughts and ideas are. Sometimes being included is all people need for them to be supportive.