

IMPACT SUMMER INSTITUTE

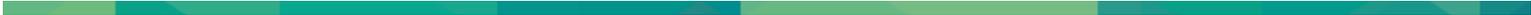
Evaluating Together: Expanding Thinking and Strengthening Practice



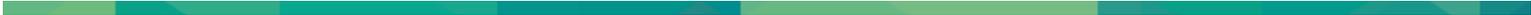
FOCUSING ON FOCUS GROUPS

A SELF-STUDY TOOLKIT

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Focusing on Focus Group Discussion: A Self-Study Toolkit

This toolkit is adapted from a half-day workshop on Focus Groups Discussion designed and delivered for OCIC IMPACT Summer Institute Participants. Please feel free to use the information with reference to OCIC and the author.

The document has three sections:

1. What is a Focus Group?
2. How to conduct Focus Groups
3. How to analyze data from Focus Groups

What is a Focus Group?

A Focus Group is a qualitative method widely used to collect data in various settings. Focus Group is a technique used in qualitative research methodology that aims to explain multiple realities and perspectives.

A Focus Group is conducted by simply asking questions to a group of people in a formal or informal setting. It is a carefully planned series of discussions designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a non-threatening environment.

When are focus groups useful?

Focus groups are used to

- obtain a range of opinions
- uncover factors that influence opinions, behaviours or motivation
- understand differences in perspectives among groups
- generate ideas to emerge from the group
- design a large-scale quantitative study or to shed light on quantitative data

When are focus groups not useful?

Focus groups are not used when

- language barriers are insurmountable and the participants are unable to listen and understand each other perspectives
- the evaluator or facilitator has little control over the group as it may lead to discussion which is out of focus
- trust cannot be established between facilitator and the group participants as the skepticism can hamper rich and honest discussion
- free expression cannot be ensured as the participants may wary of the possible harms
- confidentiality is critical as participants many not want to reveal that can jeopardize their position
- the purpose is to collect statistical data as survey is a better tool to collect that information

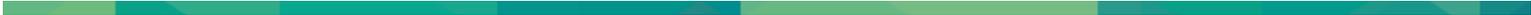
- to create consensus as focus group is meant to gather multiple, often contrasting, perspectives

Advantages and Disadvantages of Focus Groups

There are several advantages and disadvantages of focus group as entailed in the following table:

Pros	Cons
Quick and easy to conduct	Analysis is time consuming
Allows flexibility ot make changes in process and questions	Can be influenced by moderator or dominant participants
Explores different perspectives	Participants may not share information in front of others
More engaging	Participants may not be representative

Source: Morra Imas and Rist, 2009



[Click here to access the rest of the toolkit](#)

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