

FOCUS GROUPS

Focus Groups are a strategy and can be a beneficial tool when done correctly. Use this guide to ensure an efficient and comprehensive focus group.

What do you want to know?

- Be clear on what you want to know from young people.
- Un-focused questions get unusable answers
- What is going to change because of their ideas?
- What are the parameters?
- Questions about experiences should be balanced with questions about ideas.
- If all of questions are focused only on experience, reflect on how that information will be used.

Getting on the same page

- Help young people understand the context and locate themselves in a process.
- Help them understand what decisions have been made so far. What are the next steps?
- Explain key ideas (what is outreach? What is a BNL? Where did we get this data from?)
- Creative question asking, explanation or activities are ways to ensure understanding.
- A grounding activity or art exploration can help people transition into the space.

Keep older folks in the room to a minimum. Ideally a facilitator and co-facilitator. More older folks than young people can dramatically throw off the dynamic.

Pro Tip: If it feels like you are having an individual conversation with each young person, try to get them talking to each other and building off each other's ideas!

Asking Questions

- Only ask **one** question at a time. Start with questions grounded in experience and **bridge** them to system questions.
- Think about what you **need to know** and only ask about that.
- Think about how someone would answer your questions.
- Potential answers can help you **formulate** the next question.
- 99% of questions should be **open-ended**.
- **Rephrase** if people get confused or you aren't getting the needed information
- If you're getting silence or short answers, **reassess** what isn't working.
- Use creative discussion formats, art, activities and games.

Participation

- Create space for people to provide input in multiple ways.
- Focus groups require participation, be up front about that with the group
- Not everyone needs to answer every question.

Knowledge Capture

- Have a designated note taker.
- Ask people to write or take their own notes on flipcharts.
- Recording (ask for consent to record and let them know who will hear)
- Young people are often ok with being recorded anonymously to ensure the facilitator doesn't miss their important ideas.

Following up

Tell them the next steps and ask how they want to be updated about what happened because of their ideas.