

Focus Group Protocol

Description: The following are general topics for the focus group discussions. The actual focus group discussions will depend, in part, on the responses provided by the participants. There are three types of focus groups: Regular volunteers, individuals who stopped volunteering, and individuals who have never volunteered.

Focus Group I: The regular/continuous volunteer:

1. Motivation:
 - a. What comes to mind when you hear the word volunteering?
 - b. How did you get involved with volunteering? Was there an event or someone that prompted you to start volunteering?
 - c. Could you describe your volunteer experience over time? Have you maintained the same time commitment to volunteering as when you started or were there times in your life when you volunteered more/less?
 - d. How has your volunteer work changed over time? For example, are you doing different volunteer work, working with a different organization, changed the amount that you volunteer?
 - e. What motivates you to continue to volunteer?
 - f. Has there been a period when you stopped volunteering? What prompted you to stop or reduce your volunteer commitment?
 - g. What about volunteering do you enjoy the most?
 - h. Do you find your volunteer experience to be appropriately challenging and rewarding? Please explain.
 - i. When you are volunteering, what activities or situations give you the feeling that you are making a difference?
 - j. How was your volunteer experience the same/different than what you expected?
 - k. How connected do you feel to the mission of the organization that you are volunteering for?
2. Actions:
 - a. As a volunteer, what would you like to do more of? What would you like to do less of?
 - b. What is the most helpful in facilitating your ability to complete assignments and contribute to the organization where you volunteer? Please explain.
 - c. How is technology used, if at all, with your volunteer experience? For example, do you work on a computer as part of your volunteer work?
 - d. How would you describe the results of your volunteer activities?
3. Social Network:
 - a. How would you describe your volunteer experience to a friend, family member, or coworker?
 - b. What advice would you give to a family member or friend that was thinking about volunteering?
 - c. Have you encouraged others to volunteer? Why or why not?

- d. What advice would you tell new volunteers starting at the organization where you volunteer?
- e. What is your relationship like with the staff at the organization where you volunteer?

4. Volunteer Management:

- a. Did the organization discuss your volunteer goals and interests with you prior to your service? If so, did it impact your volunteer duties? Please explain.
- b. Were you offered an orientation, training, or professional development as part of your volunteer experience? If yes, what types of opportunities were available to you?
- c. In the last year, was your volunteer work recognized? If so, in what ways?
- d. How does volunteer management take place at the organization with which you volunteer (e.g., recruits, matches, trains, and recognition)?
- e. What works well and what would you like to see improved with how the organization manages volunteers?
- f. How would you recommend that the organization you volunteer with recruit new volunteers?

5. Problem Solving:

- a. If you could change one thing about your volunteer experience, what would it be?
- b. What kind of challenges do you face as a volunteer? Please discuss if this challenge was addressed and what happened as a result.

Focus Group II: For the person who has stopped volunteering (slight wording changes from the volunteering questions above):

1. Motivation:

- a. What comes to mind when you hear the word volunteering?
- b. How did you get involved with volunteering? Was there an event or someone that prompted you to start volunteering?
- c. Could you describe your volunteer experience over time? Did you maintain the same time commitment to volunteering as when you started or were there times in your life when you volunteered more/less?
- d. How did your volunteer work change over time? For example, were you doing different volunteer work, working with a different organization, or had changed the amount that you volunteered?
- e. What motivated you to start volunteering?
- f. What about volunteering did you enjoy the most?
- g. What was the most challenging part of volunteering?
- h. How was your volunteer experience the same/different than what you expected?
- i. Did you find your volunteer experience to be appropriately challenging and rewarding? Please explain.
- j. Were there factors that lead you to stop volunteering? Please describe.

- k. Do you plan on volunteering in the future? Would you like to do something different or similar to what you've done in the past? Please explain.
- l. Are there different approaches that an organization could take to encourage you to return to volunteer?
- m. How would things change to make you more likely to return to volunteering?
- n. Did you notice that during your time volunteering you felt that you had given too much? Did you feel like you needed a break from volunteering to recoup?
- o. How connected did you feel to the mission of the organization that you are volunteering for?

2. Actions:

- a. As a volunteer, what did you want to do more of? What did you want to do less of?
- b. What was the most helpful in facilitating your ability to complete assignments and contribute to the organization where you volunteer? Please explain.
- c. How was technology used, if at all, with your volunteer experience? For example, did you work on a computer as part of your volunteer work?
- d. How would you describe the results of your volunteer activities?

3. Social Network:

- a. How would you describe your volunteer experience to a friend, family member, or coworker?
- b. What advice would you give to a family member or friend that was thinking about volunteering?
- c. Have you encouraged others to volunteer? Why or why not?
- d. What advice would you tell new volunteers starting at the organization where you volunteered?
- e. What was your relationship like with the staff at the organization where you volunteered?

4. Volunteer Management:

- a. Did the organization discuss your volunteer goals and interests with you prior to your service? If so, did it impact your volunteer duties? Please explain.
- b. Were you offered an orientation, training, or professional development as part of your volunteer experience? If yes, what types of opportunities were available to you?
- c. During your volunteer experience, was your volunteer work recognized? If so, in what ways?
- d. How did volunteer management take place at the organization with which you volunteer (e.g., recruits, matches, trains, and recognition)?
- e. What works well and what would you like to see improved with how the organization manages volunteers?

- f. How would you recommend that the organization you volunteered with recruit new volunteers?
5. Problem Solving:
- a. If you could change one thing about your volunteer experience, what would it be?
 - b. What kind of challenges did you face as a volunteer? Please discuss if this challenge was addressed and what happened as a result.

Focus Group III: For the person that has never volunteered:

- 1. What activities do you enjoy being involved in?
- 2. Many people are asked to volunteer, but aren't able to volunteer. Have you been asked by someone to volunteer? What were the factors that influenced your decision?
- 3. What comes to mind when you hear the word volunteering?
- 4. Many people find it hard to find the time or the right opportunity to volunteer, are there other obstacles you think people face in trying to volunteer?
- 5. If you were interested in starting to volunteer, how would you find out about volunteer opportunities?
- 6. What is the most important thing you would consider when looking at whether to volunteer or not to volunteer?
- 7. What are the parts of volunteering that seem rewarding or burdensome?
- 8. If there was one thing that would make it easier for you to volunteer, what would it be?

Additional Questions to Guide the Focus Group Conversations:

1. In the last 12 months, have you done any volunteer activities through or for an organization?
2. Sometimes people don't think of activities they do infrequently or activities they do for children's schools or youth organizations as volunteer activities. In the last 12 months, have you done any of these types of volunteer activities?
3. How many different organizations have you volunteered through or for in the last year? What type of organization is that?
4. During how many different weeks in the last year did you do volunteer?
5. How many hours did you do volunteer activities for an organization in the last year?
6. What types of activities did you do while you were volunteering?
7. When you first became a volunteer, did you approach the organization yourself, were you asked by someone, or did you become involved in some other way?
8. If you became involved in volunteering because someone asked you to volunteer, who was that person?
9. How often do you normally volunteer? Regularly? Every once and awhile? Or when needed?
10. How involved would you say your family members are in volunteering?
11. How much did/does your volunteer experience compare to what you expected when you first enrolled?
12. How long have you lived in your current community?
13. In the last year, have you attended any public meetings in which there was discussion of community affairs?
14. In the last year, have you worked with other people in your neighborhood to fix a problem or improve a condition in your community or elsewhere?