

Planning and Conducting Focus Groups

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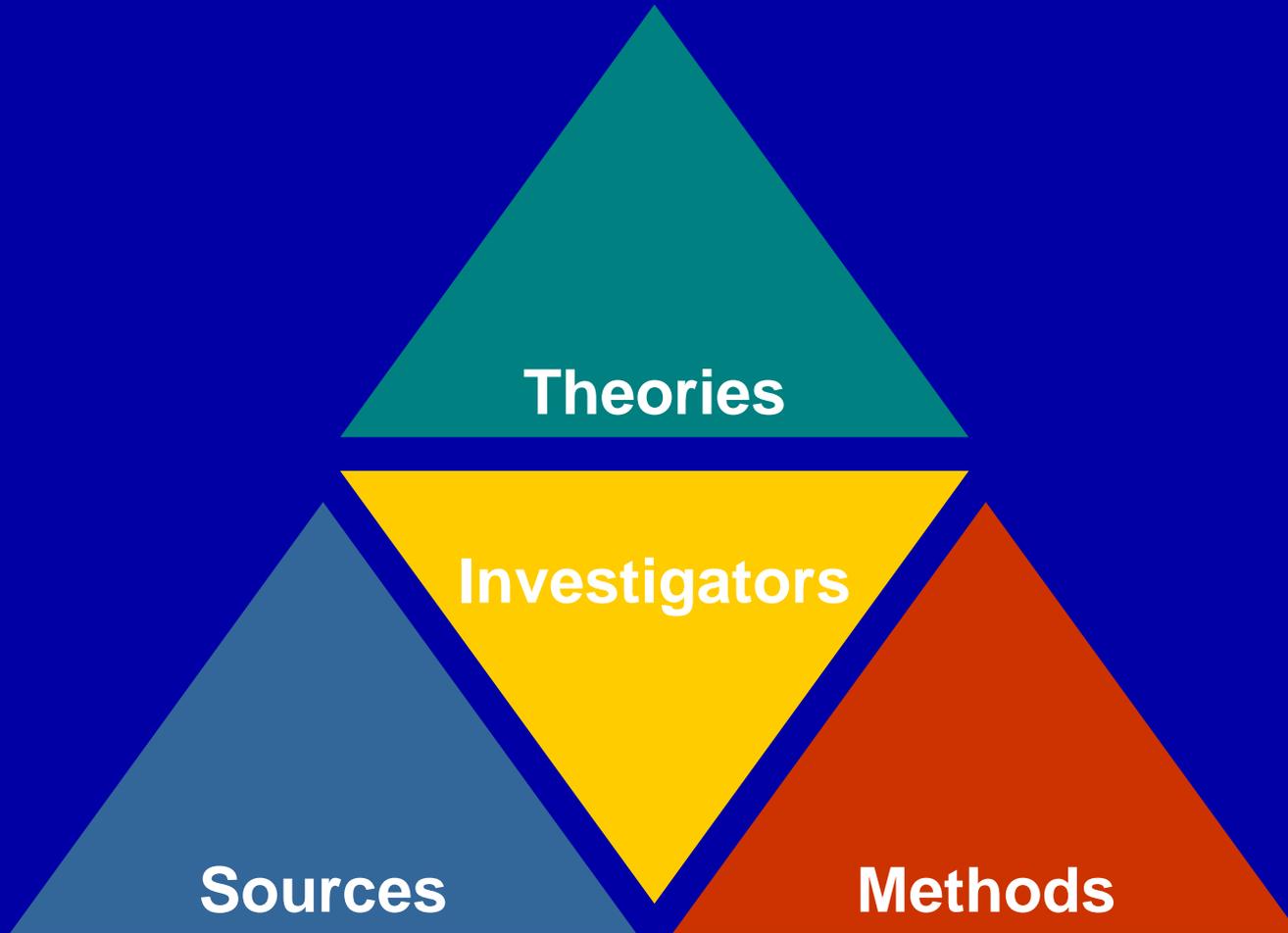
Learning Objectives

Participants will be able to:

- Understand appropriate uses for focus groups
- Plan for effective characteristics of groups
- Address cultural issues in planning and conducting focus groups
- Understand development of a focus group protocol
- Participate as a moderator or assistant moderator
- Understand the steps to analyze data and report on focus groups

Truth or Consequences Group Discussion

Triangulation



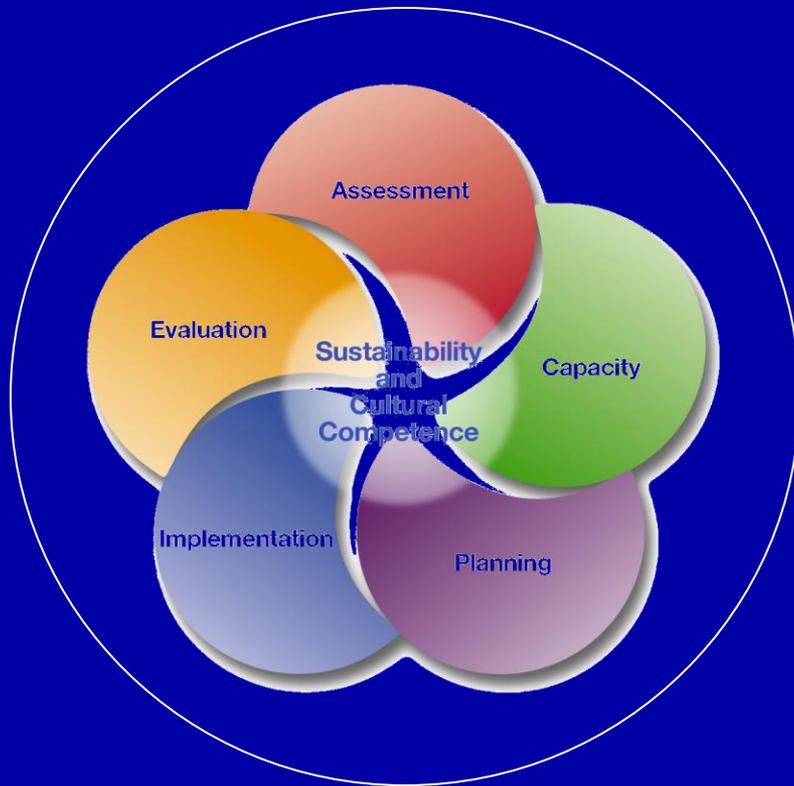
Why do we do Focus Groups?

- Listening and Learning
- Qualitative, not Quantitative, Method
- Uses

SAMHSA's

Strategic Prevention Framework

Supports Accountability, Capacity, and Effectiveness



Assessment

Profile population needs, resources, and readiness to address needs and gaps

Capacity

Mobilize and/or build capacity to address needs

Planning

Develop a Comprehensive Strategic Plan

Implementation

Implement evidence-based prevention programs and activities

Evaluation

Monitor, evaluate, sustain, and improve or replace those that fail

Characteristics of Focus Groups

- Participants
 - Have something in common
 - 5-12 people per group
 - Carefully consider demographics of participants
 - Repeat each demographic group 3-4 times for comparison
 - First name only on name tags for each person

Cultural Issues

- Elements which affect intercultural interaction
- Tips for communicating across languages
- Variables that influences individuals adjustment to new culture

Elements that Affect Intercultural Interaction

- Language
- Nonverbal behavior
- Communication style
- Values

Communication Styles Summary

- Linear vs. Circular
- Detached vs. Attached
- Idea vs. Relationship
- Procedural vs. Personal
- Formal vs. Informal

Tips for Communicating Across Languages

- Speak slowly and finish your words and sentences
- Learn basics of your foreign native language and culture (verbal and non-verbal)
- Avoid using idioms and or slangs
- Avoid statements such as “You aren’t making yourself clear”
- Summarize your ideas periodically

Tips for Communicating cont.

- Avoid interrupting your counterpart if she or he is speaking
- Try to have materials translated into your counterpart's language
- Use qualified interpreters to avoid costly misunderstandings

Working with your Interpreter

- The interpreter will appreciate to hear the tone and cadence of your voice before starting
- Become acquainted with your party's culture
- Use of short sentences and pause regularly
- Use simple English

Variables that Influence Individuals to New Culture

- Attitude of receiving host
- Presence of family members
- Reason or condition of immigration
- Similarity between old and new culture

Characteristics of Focus Groups

- Environment
 - Comfortable atmosphere
 - Circle seating
 - Tape recording is optional

Tape Recording: Considerations

- Need for Completely Accurate Transcript
- Availability of Resources
- Ability To Get Consent
- Affect on Participation

Characteristics of Focus Groups

- Moderator
 - Skilled in group discussion
 - Uses pre-determined questions
 - Establishes permissive environment
 - Builds trust and the belief that input is valued

Characteristics of Focus Groups

- Assistant Moderator
 - Skilled note-taker and observer
 - Aids in the coordination of focus group logistics both prior to and during the focus group session

Characteristics of Focus Groups

- Room Warmer or Logistical Assistant (optional)
 - Deals with sign-in, food, incentives
 - Greets late arrivals
 - Allows moderator and assistant moderator to stay focused

Characteristics of Focus Groups

- Participant Incentives
 - Likely to increase the number of participants
 - Dinner or snack
 - Money or gift card (documentation needed?)
 - Intangible incentives: child care, transportation

Characteristics of Focus Groups

- Host Agency
 - Provides insight into participant recruitment, protocol, or other aspects
 - May help with recruitment
 - Aids in the coordination of focus group logistics

Question Development

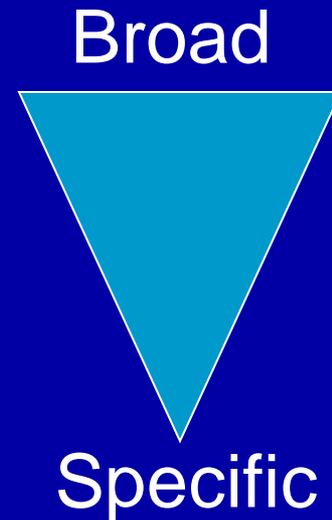
- Everyone is involved in development
- Use open-ended questions
- Avoid dichotomous (yes/no) questions
- “Why?” is rarely asked
- Use “think back” questions
- Avoid jargon
- Use questions that get participants involved
 - Make a list
 - Fill in the blank
 - Drawing
 - Choices

Probes

- Asks question or solicits information
- Focuses your question
- Determine common probes ahead of time
- May add impromptu probes to pursue a relevant thread

Question Sequence

- Questions are typically sequenced like a funnel
 - Opening question
 - Introductory questions
 - Transition questions
 - Key questions



Ending Question

- Reflects the entire discussion
 - “Of all the things we discussed, what is the most important to you?”

Finally...

- After the series of questions have been created, read them aloud. Listen for appropriate sequencing and wording for each question.

Role of the Moderator

- Is mentally prepared
- Uses purposeful small talk
- Provides a smooth introduction of 3-5 minutes
- Uses pauses and probes
- Controls his/her reactions
- Uses subtle group control
- Uses appropriate conclusion
- Helps the Assistant Moderator get notes

Role of the Moderator

- Above all else, the moderator should make eye contact and be respectful.
- These build trust and the belief that input from the group is valued.

Role of the Assistant Moderator

- Welcomes participants
- Operate recording equipment (if used)
- Takes notes
- Observes participants
- Does not usually participate in discussion
- Debriefs with moderator after session
- Gives feedback or assists with data analysis and reporting

Note-Taking Handout and Worksheet

Mock Focus Group and Initial Data Analysis

Mock Focus Group Debrief

Data Analysis

- Immediately after the group
 - Draw a diagram of the seating arrangement and note key characteristics of participants (e.g. hair color, gender, clothing)
 - Moderator and assistant moderator should debrief the session noting themes, hunches and ideas
 - Compare and contrast this group with others that have already been conducted

Data Analysis

- Within hours of the group
 - If used, have tape recording transcribed
 - Review notes and fill in any gaps
 - Combine moderator notes and assistant moderator notes
 - Prepare a brief report of this group in a question-by-question format
 - Ask for feedback from assistant moderator

Data Analysis

- Within days of the group
 - Compare and contrast results between focus groups
 - Look for emerging themes by question
 - Look for emerging themes overall
 - Describe findings and use quotes to illustrate the key points
 - Beware of letting initial results taint later groups

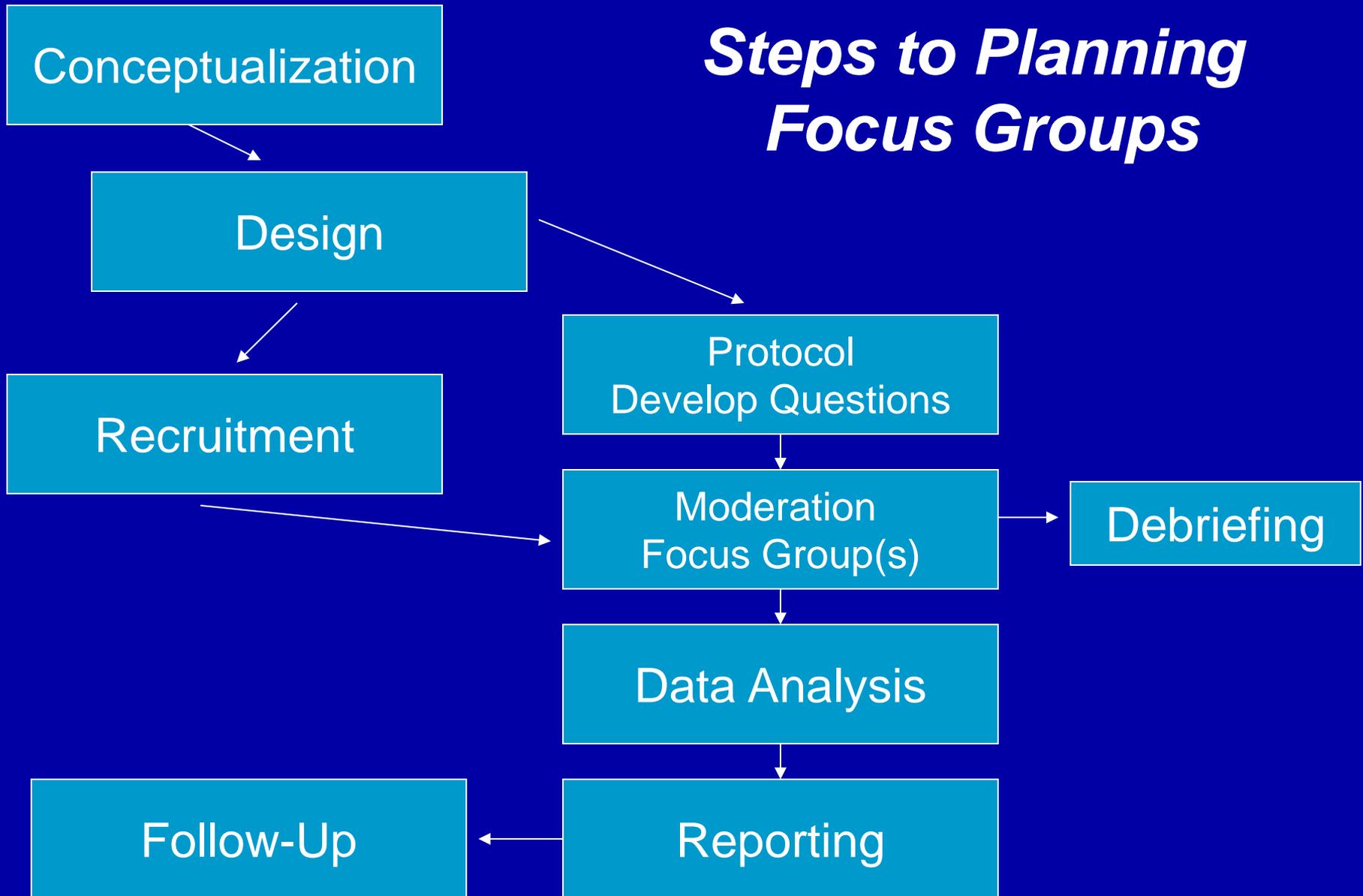
Reporting

- It is important to think in the beginning of the project about how the information will be reported and used by stakeholders.
- Use a reporting style that will be useful to the client and meets expectations
 - Narrative vs. bulleted format
 - Question-by-question vs. theme
 - Inclusion of other data sources

Reporting

- Provide new insights on the topic
- Limit the number of key points so they will be remembered
- Always verify findings with other staff
- Oral reports should be brief, clear and concise

Steps to Planning Focus Groups



Questions about Focus Groups?

Key Informant Interviews

Similarities between Focus Groups and Key Informant Interviews

- Questions are developed the same way
- Conversational
- Qualitative
- Data analysis and reporting process is the same
- “Curiosity” factor

Differences between Focus Groups and Key Informant Interviews

FOCUS GROUPS

- Group setting
- Target population
- In-person
- Participants change their mind and shift opinions
- Participants interact with each other
- Challenging to keep group on track
- Participants respond to questions as well as other's comments

INTERVIEWS

- Individual interviews
- Special experts, limited #
- Can be over the phone
- Interviewees tend to be consistent in their opinions
- Interaction is between respondent and interviewer
- Interviewer uses more probes
- Easier to keep respondent on track
- Participant responds only to questions asked

Probing for Responses

- Being naïve about the topic is a plus
- The interviewee's first response rarely tells the entire story
- Paraphrasing is an effective way to probe
- “Say more about that” is an invitation to talk more
- Consider consistency in your probing
- Prepare probes in advance

Sample Interview Protocols

Questions about Key
Informant Interviews?

Learning Objectives Check-In

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Happy Trails to You

- Please complete and turn in evaluations
- Drive safely
- Thank you!