



Research for Organizing Webinar Series

Module 5: Focus Groups – Qualitative Data

Presenters

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Research and Policy Associate



Agenda

- Logistics
- Who we are
- Past Modules
- Introduction to Qualitative Data
- Introduction to Focus Groups
- Case Study
- Focus Group Design
- Outreach Plan
- Conducting & Facilitating the FG
- Q & A

Webinar Logistics

- **Audio Options:**

- **Listen by phone:**

- Select “telephone” in the audio option on the control panel.
 - Call the number sent to you in registration confirmation
 - Enter your access code
 - Enter your audio pin (press # [code numbers]#) so we can identify you.
 - Pin will be shown on your screen when you log in online.

- ***Or, listen through your computer’s audio.***

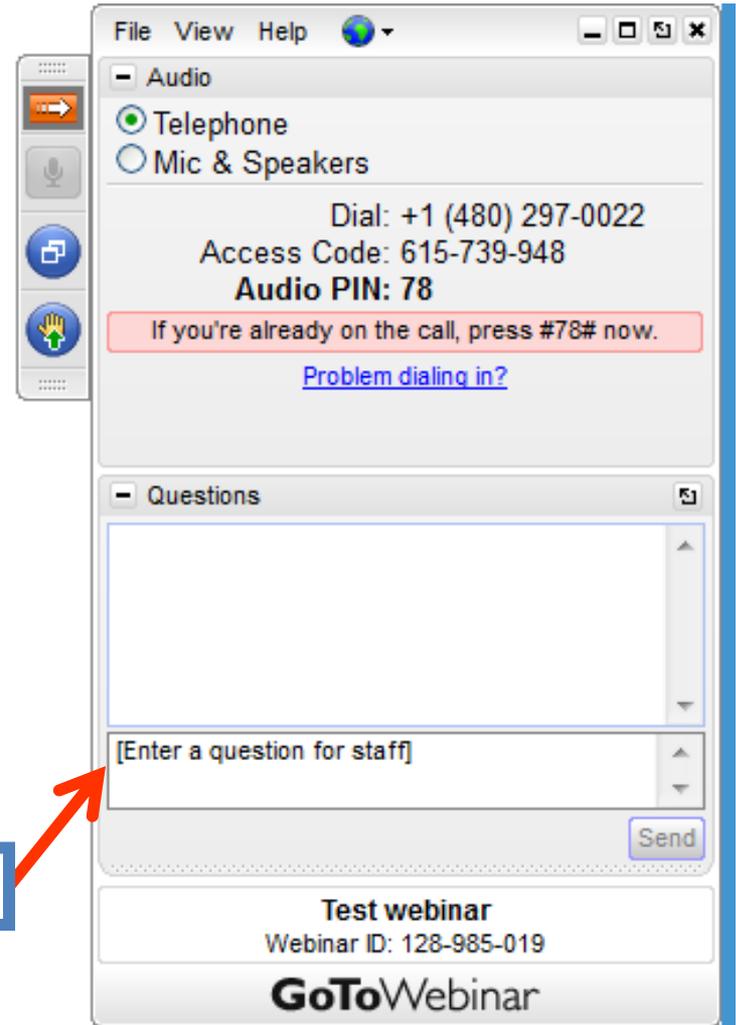
Everyone but the presenters will be muted to reduce background noise.

Webinar Logistics

Questions

- As we go through the webinar, if you have any questions, you can type them into the question box
- We will answer questions after the webinar during the Q&A session

Your questions here!



INTRODUCTION TO THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT (CDP)

Who is CDP?

- Strengthen impact of grassroots organizations, through...
 - Participatory Action Research Reports
 - Grassroots Policymaking
 - Popular-Education Curriculum Design and Research Training
 - Strategic Campaign Research

CDP Partnership Model

- Prioritize working with groups that...
 - Are based in low-income/excluded communities in New York City
 - Conduct community organizing campaigns with a goal of achieving systemic change
 - Are membership-based, member-led
 - Engage in leadership development and base-building activities

POLL:

**Have you previously attended or watched
a recording of a Research for Organizing
Webinar?**

Research For Organizing Webinar Series

- [Module 1: Unpacking the Toolkit](#)
- [Module 2: Designing your Research Project](#)
- [Module 3: Overview of Research Methods](#)
- [Module 4: Creating, designing, and implementing Surveys – Quantitative Data](#)
- **Module 5: Focus Groups – Qualitative Data**

MODULE 5: QUALITATIVE DATA METHODS— FOCUS GROUPS

Objectives for this Module

- *Participants will be able to...*
 - *Understand what qualitative data is and its use in participatory action research*
 - *Understand the benefits and challenges of implementing focus groups*
 - *Understand how to design and conduct focus groups*
 - *Understand how to do outreach and sampling for focus groups*
 - *Understand how members can be involved in focus groups from design to implementation*

INTRODUCTION TO PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH (PAR)

Participatory Action Research (PAR)

- Community-driven
- Power-building
- Action oriented



RESEARCH FOR ORGANIZING (RFO) TOOLKIT

Research for Organizing Toolkit

- Designed for organizations and individuals using PAR in social justice work
- Compiled from years of working with grassroots organizations
- Trainings, tools and tips created for organizers & community members to become more actively involved in research process

RFO Table of Contents

RESEARCH FOR ORGANIZING
A Toolkit for Participatory Action Research from the Community Development Project

[SIGN UP FOR OUR MAILING LIST](#)

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DOWNLOAD THE ENTIRE GUIDE AS A PDF

DESCARGA SECCIONES EN ESPAÑOL

- Timeline of a PAR Project
- An Overview of Participatory Action Research
- Designing Your Research Project
- Getting Your Data
 - I. Surveys
 - II. Interviews
 - III. Focus Groups**
 - IV. Community Mapping
 - V. Community Visioning
 - VI. Mystery Shopping
- Entering Your Data Into a Database
- Analyzing Your Data
- Presenting and Packaging the Report
- Releasing the Report
- Glossary of Terms
- Tips for Facilitators

[Step-by-step Timeline of a Participatory Action Research Project](#)

[Case Studies](#)

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Step-by-step Timeline of a Participatory Action Research Project

Community Development Project

INTRODUCTION TO QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION



Quantitative and Qualitative Data

- **QUANTITATIVE DATA**

- Data that is presented numerically

- **QUALITATIVE DATA**

- Descriptive data that can help tell peoples' stories

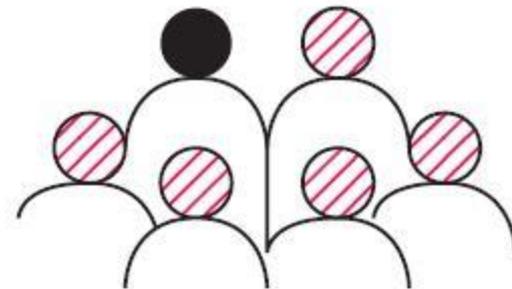
Methods of Qualitative Data Collection

- Focus Groups
- Interviews
- Field notes / Observations
- Ethnography

QUALITATIVE DATA IS DATA.



INTRODUCTION TO FOCUS GROUPS



FOCUS GROUPS



Focus Groups

- Small group sessions (usually 7-10 people) led by a facilitator to collect qualitative data
- Guided discussions with pre-determined questions
- Questions are open-ended

Benefits of a Focus Group

- Good **public education** and **organizing** tool
- Participants **build off each other** to come up with creative solutions
- Participants see that they are **not isolated**
- Is good for **filling in the gaps** of knowledge that quantitative data may leave

Challenges of a Focus Group

- People may not be as **forthcoming** in a group
- Some may use the space to **air grievances** or provide support to others rather than answering questions
- If participant's **first experience** with your organization is the focus group they might think you only do research



**CASE STUDY:
RIGHT TO THE CITY –
WE CALL THESE PROJECTS HOME**

Right to the City – We Call These Projects Home



Background on the Issue

**They Run it Down
to Tear it Down**



WHAT...

Were the Organizing Goals connected to this research?

- Shift the policy debate about public housing to include the voices of low-income community members.
- To educate elected officials and policy makers about the real-life impact of demolition, disinvestment, and privatization of public housing.
- To build power nationally among low-income community members.

WHAT...

Overall questions did RTTC want to answer through their research?

- How have low-income residents been impacted by the destruction of and divestment in public housing?
- What is the need for public housing as a permanently affordable source?

HOW Did RTTC gather information (what methods did they use)?

- **FOCUS GROUPS:** collected qualitative data from 72 public housing residents in 6 cities
 - Allowed RTTC to collect the stories and experiences about the impact of housing policies on low-income residents
 - Achieve the goal of highlighting residents' voices in the public housing policy debate.
 - Brought residents together as communities to share their experiences

Key Findings

RESIDENTS DO NOT FEEL THAT THEY HAVE ADEQUATE INPUT INTO DECISIONS THAT ARE MADE ABOUT PUBLIC HOUSING AND HAVE DIFFICULTY HOLDING HUD AND PUBLIC HOUSING AUTHORITIES ACCOUNTABLE FOR THEIR ACTIONS.

Currently, HUD does not have strong enough mechanisms in place to ensure that residents have a meaningful voice in decision-making and consequently, residents do not feel like they have adequate power in shaping decisions about public housing.

“I’m the one who lives [in public housing]...the people who control the budget at the housing authority, they never lived in the public housing. They don’t know what we need in public housing. They don’t sit out at night and watch the children play. They don’t know what goes on in public housing.”

-New Orleans Focus Group Participant #2

Key Findings

NEGATIVE IMAGES AND STEREOTYPES DOMINATE THE MEDIA'S COVERAGE OF PUBLIC HOUSING AND PERPETUATE MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT RESIDENTS.

A review of 400 newspaper articles revealed the prevalence of negative images about public housing.

- Guns and poverty are the two most prevalent words found in the articles about public housing.
- Although most reporting on public housing in the mass media focuses on crime and violence, residents see public housing as a vibrant community and a good place to live and raise a family.

“When you hear public housing [in the media] you think gunshots, fires, crimes, and drugs, and murders, and killings. But they also do not tell you that the next-door neighbor is there for you. They got your back. These projects – they are considered a family. We call these projects home. That is what people really need to know. That’s the positive side of it.”

-Miami Focus Group Participant #8

HOW...

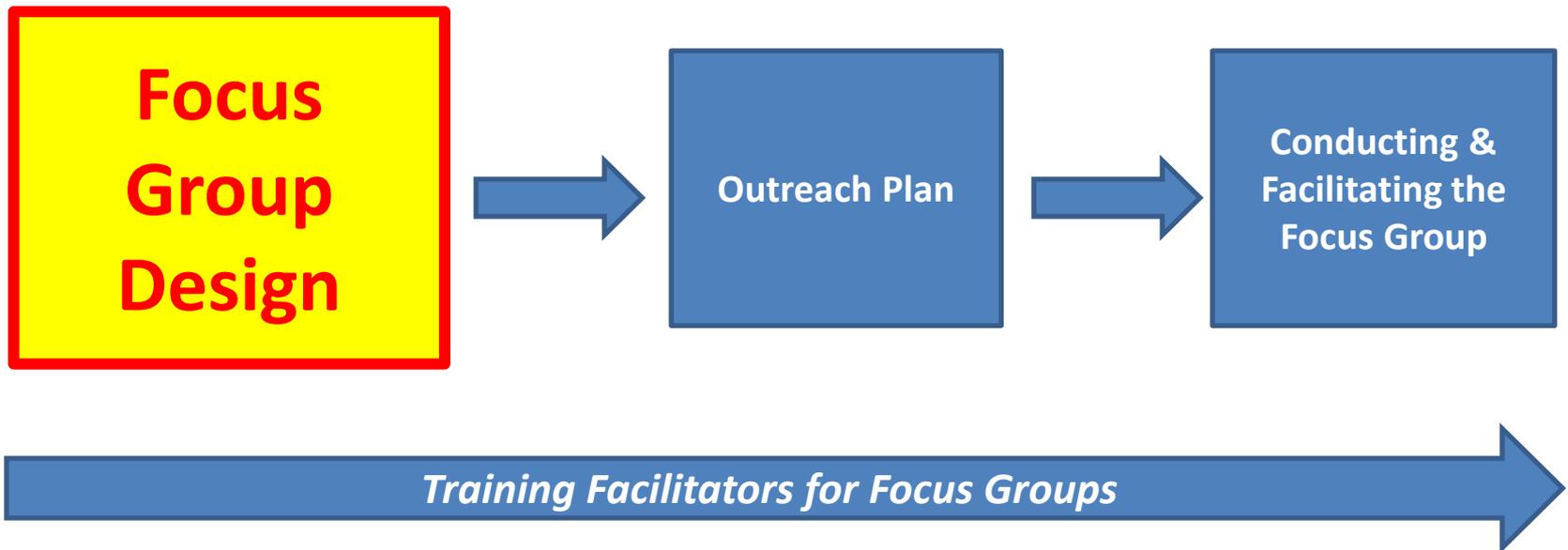
Did research support the coalition's organizing efforts?

- RTTC released a national report based on findings and presented them at a congressional briefing in Washington, DC
- The report received media attention, ensuring that the voices of public housing residents are in the debate about public housing

THE BLOG

Housing Discrimination, Gentrification and Black Lives: We Call These Projects Home





Designing the Focus Group

- Go back and look at research questions
- Determine categories/themes for questions you would want to ask
- Develop a focus group guide
- Decide how many focus groups you want to conduct
- Decide who you want to participate in the focus groups
- Decide who will fill in key roles at the focus group

Getting Started

- Start with research questions
 - Which research questions can best be explored by a focus group?
 - Identify broad categories of questions
 - Review any data previously collected such as survey data or literature reviews to identify gaps
 - Develop focus group questions based on categories and gaps in data

Identifying Categories of Questions

- What is the need for public housing as a permanently affordable source?
- What needs to be done to ensure public housing remains a source of permanently affordable housing?

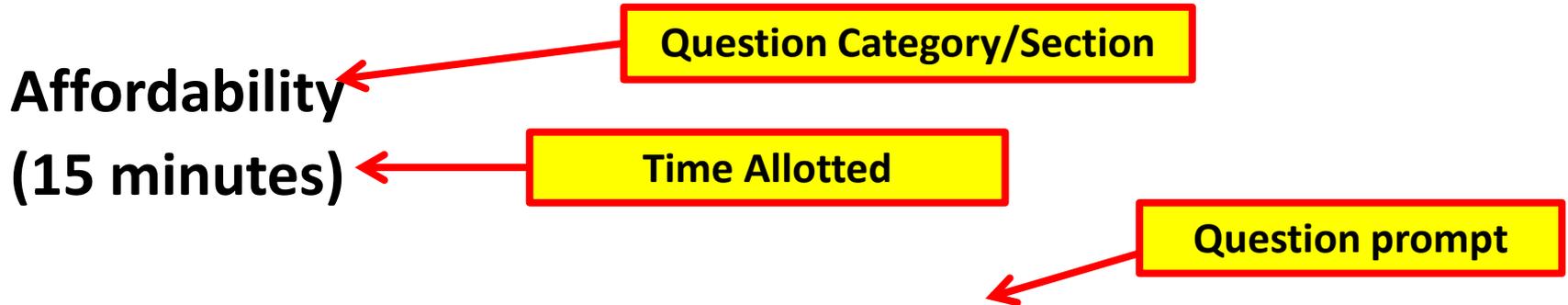
Affordability

What is a Focus Group Guide?

Guided set of questions for the facilitator's use:

- Questions organized into categories
- Helps facilitate the discussion
- Ensures same questions are asked of each group
- Enables you to answer your specific research questions

Sample Focus Group Guide



Affordability
(15 minutes)

Question Category/Section

Time Allotted

Question prompt

Next we are going to discuss some of the challenges we have living in today's economy.

- How do you feel about the amount of money you have to pay for rent and how does this impact your life or your family?
- What are some things that could be done (by government or someone else) to help you and your family meet your basic needs?

Questions

Crafting Good Focus Group Questions

Good focus group questions:

- Are open-ended
- Are easy to say
- Are clear and simple
- Are short and to the point
- Include clear instructions
- Are neutral/not leading

Survey Questions vs. Focus Group Questions

Survey Question:

In the past 3 years, have you ever had difficulty communicating with public housing staff or management because of a language barrier?

Yes

No

Focus Group Questions:

- How do you feel about the amount of money you have to pay for rent and how does this impact your life or your family?
- If you didn't have to pay rent, what are some of the ways you would spend the extra money?
- What are some things that could be done (by government or someone else) to help you and your family meet your basic needs?



Outreach Plan

- Decide how many focus groups you can feasibly conduct and how many people you want at each focus group
- Based on that number, conduct outreach to a larger set of people than you want to attend
- If you conducted surveys before, consider outreach to survey respondents

Participants

- Think about who is impacted:
 - Different geographic locations?
 - Languages?
 - Age groups?
- Weigh the pros and cons of organizing focus groups based on demographics
- Ensure that you have the equipment and resources you need for language access



Roles Needed for Focus Group Facilitation

- **Facilitator** leads the discussion.
 - It's good to have someone who is well trained and very familiar with what is being discussed.
- **Note Taker** notes down what is being said and should be familiar with recording equipment

Roles Needed for Focus Group Facilitation

- **Interpreter /Translator** with experience, somewhat familiar with the topic or key terms
- **Time Keeper** makes sure that conversations proceed in a timely manner

Equipment Needed for Focus Group Facilitation

- Digital recorder
- Sound storage
- Extension cords
- Extra batteries

Ideal Conditions for Focus Groups

- Being in a quiet space so a small group of people can have a discussion
 - If you have multiple focus groups going on, they should be in separate rooms
- Arrange chairs in a circle so everyone can see each other
- Consider accessibility needs of participants (travel, timing, stairs/elevator access)
- Try to arrange for food and childcare if possible



Activity 3.4: Preparing for a Focus Group

DOWNLOAD
ACTIVITY 3.4

Activity: 3.4 Preparing for a Focus Group

Purpose of Activity:

This activity is designed to educate participants about the basics of focus groups, focus group guides, and how to devise effective focus group questions.

By the End of Activity Participants Will:

- Learn the basics of setting up and conducting focus groups
- Develop questions for a focus group guide

Before this Activity Participants Will Need to:

Have determined your research goals and research questions
Have decided on your research method

Materials Needed:

Butcher Paper
Markers
Butcher Paper with list of Research Goals and Research Questions

Key Terms

Focus Group
Focus Group Guide
Facilitator
Qualitative Data



3. Getting Your Data: Focus Groups

Activities

[Preparing for a Focus Group](#)
[Facilitating a Focus Group](#)

Tools

[Benefits and Challenges of Focus Groups](#)
[Tips for Focus Group Facilitation](#)
[Sample Focus Group Guide](#)

Case Studies

[Right to the City National's Report: We Call These Projects Home](#)

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Activity 3.5: Facilitating a Focus Group

DOWNLOAD
ACTIVITY 3.5

Activity: 3.5 Facilitating a Focus Group

Purpose of Activity:

This activity will give participants a chance to practice facilitating a focus group. It will also allow the participants to become familiar with the focus group guide and to identify common challenges in facilitating a focus group.

Goals:

To practice leading and guiding the focus group discussion

To test focus group questions for flow and clarity

Tools Needed:

Tool 3.7: Benefits and Challenges of Using Focus Groups

Tool 3.8: Tips for Focus Group Facilitation

Materials Needed:

Butcher Paper

Markers



3. Getting Your Data: Focus Groups

Activities

[Preparing for a Focus Group](#)

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Common Challenging Personalities in Focus Group Facilitation

- **“The Debater:”** Disagrees with other participants and tries to turn the conversation into a debate.
- **“The Wanderer:”** Brings up different topics, unrelated to the focus group questions.
- **“The Quiet One:”** Gives short answers with one or two words and does not elaborate.

Common Challenging Personalities in Focus Group Facilitation

- **“The Talker:”** Dominates the conversation, interrupts other participants.
- **“The Counselor:”** Tries to help others fix their problems, providing specific advice.
- **“The Disrupter:”** Answers cell phone and/or gets up in the middle of the conversation to leave the room

Tool 3.8: Tips for Focus Group Facilitation

DOWNLOAD
TOOL 3.8

Tool: 3.8 Tips for Focus Group Facilitation

Checklist of Materials Needed For a Focus Group

- A notepad and pens or laptop for note-taking
- A flip chart, markers, tape for group activities
- Informed Consent forms
- Sign in form
- Extra pens for participants to sign consent forms
- Focus group guide
- Name tags
- Brief demographic questionnaires

Recording equipment:

- Digital recorder
- Sound storage discs/tapes/cards
- Extension cord
- Extra batteries

Room Setup Checklist:

- Room with minimal background noise / traffic
- Chairs set up in a circle
- If recording, table for the equipment



3. Getting Your Data: Focus Groups

Activities

[Preparing for a Focus Group](#)

[Facilitating a Focus Group](#)

Tools

[Benefits and Challenges of Focus Groups](#)

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How to involve members

- Team of leaders to oversee the research project
- Leadership team can brainstorm focus group categories or topics
- Membership can participate in the focus group
- Leaders can also be trained to be facilitators

AFTER THE FOCUS GROUP



What Does Focus Group Data Look Like?

- If you recorded the discussions, then they need to be transcribed
- Collection of notes of what was said during the group sessions
- Pull out common themes and powerful quotes that tell the story of your findings

Using Focus Group Data

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Focus group data

Using Focus Group Data

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Supporting findings

Focus group data

Q&A



Research For Organizing Webinar Series

- Module 1: Unpacking the Toolkit
- Module 2: Designing your Research Project
- Module 3: Getting Your Data and Utilizing Databases
- Module 4: Creating, designing, and implementing Surveys – Quantitative Data
- Module 5: Focus Groups – Qualitative Data

Research For Organizing Webinar Series

Moving Forward

- **Module 6: Interviews – Qualitative Data**
- Module 7: Mystery shopping/observations
- Module 8: Data Entry
- Module 9: Creating research findings and Policy Recommendations
- Module 10: Presenting & Releasing your Research