

Module 2. Tools Appendix

A. Determine Whether to Conduct Focus Groups, Interviews, or Both

Use the questions below to consider whether you will conduct focus groups, interviews, or both before developing surveys.

1. Identify your group of interest. With whom will you conduct focus group or interviews? Some options include:

- Students
- Out-of-school youth (particularly if you are interested in the experiences of disengaged youth)
- Teachers and instructional staff
- School counseling/youth development staff
- School personnel responsible for operations and management
- Community members
- Parents

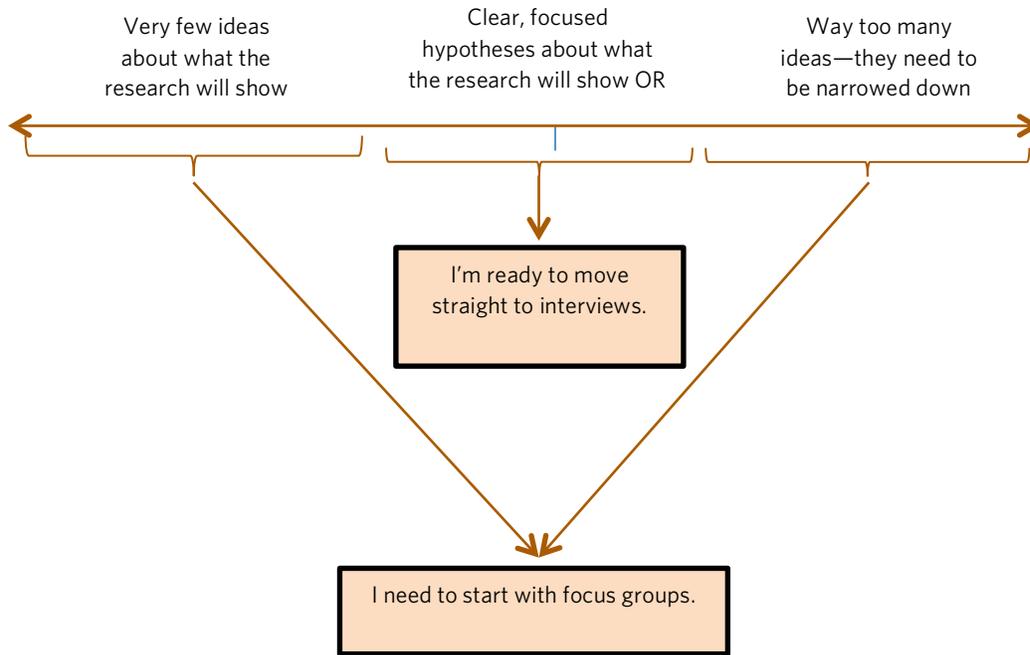
2. Consider your research question.

- a) Does your research question relate to controversial or sensitive topics? If so, do you think the group of interest will feel comfortable discussing these topics in a group setting?

- b) When we ask our research question, we believe respondents will say:

- c) How finite is the list of possible responses you came up with in the previous step? That is, can you count on your hands a few specific responses you expect or is it your sense that there may be a wide range of responses that you can't quite predict?

3. Consider your answers to the previous question. Based on those answers, where do you place yourself on the below continuum? What does that suggest about how best to move forward?



4. If you will be starting with focus groups, will you conduct a focus group and then conduct one-on-one interviews? This will allow you to develop a more refined survey instrument, but will require more time and coordination. Consider:

a) Is there sufficient time to conduct both focus groups and interviews before you begin to administer surveys?

b) Do you have sufficient access to the group of interest to conduct both focus groups and interviews?

c) Will you conduct both focus groups and interviews?

B. Develop a Focus Group Protocol

Use the questions below to develop your focus group protocol.

1. Develop an introduction. The introduction to your focus group should make clear the group's purpose and value, who you are and why you care about the focus group topic, and whether participation is confidential or anonymous.

a) Draft an introductory paragraph for your focus group.

b) Review and revise your paragraph to ensure it makes clear:

- The purpose of the focus group;
- Who you are and why you care about the focus group's purpose;
- Why participation will prove beneficial to the school (and ideally, to participants); and
- Whether participants' comments will be confidential and/or anonymous.

2. Establish ground rules. It is important to establish ground rules for any facilitated discussion. Ground rules often include guidelines like:

- There are no bad ideas: share whatever you are thinking.
- Everyone gets a turn to speak.
- Silence is not a bad thing—it means people are taking time to think.
- Disagreement is how we discover the most interesting insights, but express your disagreement respectfully.

Write your own ground rules for the discussion. You can use the ground rules listed above. Consider whether you would add any based on your knowledge of the group.

3. Develop a warm-up. Warm-ups are brief activities that allow participants to share their name and some thoughts on the focus group topic with the group. The questions posed should be easy to answer yet reflective, non-judgmental, and answerable in 1-2 sentences.

a) What question will you pose to the group as a warm-up?

b) How will you structure the warm-up?

- Think-pair-share (Participants think individually, share their response with a partner, and then share out with the group)
- Reflect and then share with whole group
- Another way:

c) How will you introduce the warm-up to the group? Write a brief "script" in which you explain the warm-up.

d) Review and revise your script to ensure it includes the following features:

- A question that:
 - Relates to the focus group topic
 - Does not require intense reflection
 - Only takes 1-2 sentences to answer
- Opportunity for individual reflection
- Opportunity for whole-group share-out

4. Develop questions.
- a) Use the space below to brainstorm all the questions you might ask on the focus group topic, from reflective questions to questions that require only recall or reporting (“Which adults do you interact with at school?”). Use the right column to note questions that are especially reflective or sensitive.

Question	Level of Reflection Required	Level of Controversy/Sensitivity
	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Low	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Low
	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Low	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Low
	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Low	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Low
	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Low	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Low
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	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Low	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Low

- b) Review the questions you brainstormed on the previous page. Are there any questions that are fairly similar or seem repetitive? If so, either combine these questions or drop one of them.
- c) Each question will likely require 7-10 minutes of discussion. Given that you have limited time, place a * next to the 5-8 questions you think are most important for the discussion, based on the amount of time you have available for your focus group.

- d) Consider the questions you placed a * next to. In the space below, order these questions such that they progress from less reflective and/or sensitive to more reflective and/or sensitive, and then end on a relatively less reflective and less sensitive note.

Question
1)
2)
3)
4)
5)
6)
7)
8)

C. Plan Your Focus Group

Use the questions below to think through the logistics of conducting a focus group.

1. Identifying time and place.

- a) How many focus groups will you conduct? Focus groups are comprised of 4-8 people. If you have multiple sub-groups of interest, consider conducting sufficient focus groups to hear from 2-3 people from each of your sub-groups.

- b) Where will focus groups be held? Consider whether participants will have easy access to this location, as well as the logistics of securing a private room.

- c) On what date(s) will focus group(s) take place? Consider the timeline of your project and access to space in answering this question.

- d) At what time will focus group(s) take place? Consider logistics for your participants, such as school and work schedules.

2) Select participants.

- a) Who is the group of interest for your focus group (e.g., students at local feeder middle schools)?

- b) What are the sub-groups of interest for your analysis? If you are having difficulty answering this question, consider how you expect answers to vary across different members of your groups of interest (for example, by gender, attendance, or grades).

- c) How will you identify and get access to the group of interest (e.g., by asking local middle school principals)?

d) How many participants do you need to participate? Focus groups typically consist of 4-6 participants.

e) Who will you invite to participate (e.g., six students chosen by local middle school principal, two students from three different middle schools, etc.)? How will you ensure they represent the sub-groups of interest?

f) Who will be responsible for inviting the students and securing their participation?

g) Who will be responsible for reminding participants of the focus group in advance?

h) What is the best way to remind participants of the focus group?

- E-mail
- Phone call
- Text message
- Facebook message
- Contact with parent via _____
- Other: _____

i) If necessary, how will confidentiality of participants be managed during the recruitment/invitation process?

j) Will participants need any assistance in arriving to the focus group (e.g., transportation or assistance for people with disabilities)? If so, who will be responsible for arranging that support?

D. Prepare for Data Analysis (Focus Groups)

1. Do you have (or can you get) the capacity to video- or audio-record the focus group?

- Yes
- No

2. If yes, make any notes about the preparation required for recording here (e.g., need to request equipment, etc.).

3. If not, is there someone (staff, intern, etc.) who could keep a typewritten rough transcript of the focus group?

- Yes
- No

4. If yes, make any notes about the preparation required for transcription here (e.g., coordinating with staff, obtaining a computer, etc.).

E. Develop an Interview Protocol

This worksheet assumes you developed a set of focus group questions using the worksheet in Section 3. Start by examining the set of focus group questions you developed in Section 3.

1. Based on what you learned during the focus group, are there any question you would modify by, for example, adjusting the language or phrasing of the question? If so, re-write those questions using the space below.

2. Based on what you learned during the focus group, are there any questions to which you would add follow-up questions asking for examples or more detail (e.g., "Tell me about a time where a teacher treated you disrespectfully," or "What made the relationship so positive?"). If so, note the question and the follow-up question you would ask below.

Original Question	Follow-up Question Asking for Examples or More Detail

3. Based on what you learned during the focus group, are there any questions you would add? For example, were there any topics that arose frequently during focus groups that were not addressed in the original questions?

4. Using your work in the previous steps, write out your new interview protocol.

F. Plan Interviews

1. Identifying time and place.

- a) How many interviews will you conduct? Consider your sub-groups. Ideally, you will conduct sufficient interviews to interview 3-4 people from each of your sub-groups of interest.

- b) Where will interviews be held? Consider whether participants will have easy access to this location.

- c) On what date(s) will interview(s) take place? Consider the timeline of your project and access to space and participants in answering this question.

- d) At what time will interviews(s) take place? Consider logistics for your participants, such as school and work schedules.

2. Select participants.

- a) How many people do you plan to interview?

- b) What are the sub-groups of interest for your analysis? If you are having difficulty answering this question, consider how you expect answers to vary across different members of your groups of interest (for example, by gender, attendance, or grades).

- c) Who will you invite to participate? Keep your sub-groups of interest in mind.

- d) Who will be responsible for inviting the students and securing their participation?

e) Who will be responsible for reminding participants of the interviews in advance?

f) If necessary, how will confidentiality of participants be managed and maintained during the recruitment/invitation process?

g) Will participants need any assistance in arriving to the interviews (e.g., transportation or assistance for participants with disabilities)? If so, who will be responsible for arranging that support?

G. Prepare for Data Analysis (Interviews)

1. How will you record interviews?

- Audio-record and arrange for transcription
- Someone else transcribes while I interview
- I transcribe while I interview
- I write up notes after each interview:
- Another approach:

2. Based on the option you selected above, make any notes about steps you will need to take to prepare here (e.g., purchase recording equipment, coordinate with staff, etc.).