

**USDA – FOOD STAMP PROGRAM (FSP)  
FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE  
ELIGIBLE NONPARTICIPANTS**

**OBJECTIVES OF THE FOCUS GROUP**

- ASSESS PARTICIPANTS' AWARENESS OF THE NUTRITION BENEFITS OF THE FSP
- OBTAIN INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS' MEDIA-CONSUMPTION HABITS AND PREFERENCES
- OBTAIN RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PARTICIPANTS ON THE TYPES OF MEDIA MATERIALS AND NUTRITION MESSAGES THAT WOULD BE HELPFUL TO THOSE DECIDING ON WHETHER TO PARTICIPATE
- OBTAIN FEEDBACK TO RADIO SPOTS
- OBTAIN FEEDBACK TO ENGLISH LANGUAGE TV SPOT
- OBTAIN FEEDBACK TO OTHER USDA OUTREACH MATERIALS, INCLUDING PRESENTATIONS

THE FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE AND ALL SUPPORTING HANDOUTS AND CREATIVE ELEMENTS (E.G., RADIO AND TV SCRIPTS, BROCHURES) WILL BE TRANSLATED IN SPANISH AFTER OMB APPROVAL FOR THIS PACKAGE HAS BEEN OBTAINED. A FH/GMMB SUBCONTRACTOR WILL TRANSLATE ALL MATERIALS.

**NOTE:** THIS IS THE FH/GMMB DISCUSSION LEADERS' GUIDE. IT WILL GUIDE THE LEADER THROUGH THE DISCUSSION BUT WILL NOT BE READ VERBATIM TO PARTICIPANTS. PLEASE NOTE THAT THE LEADER WILL READ OUT LOUD ONLY THOSE WORDS OR SENTENCES THAT APPEAR IN REGULAR TYPE FACE.

I. INTRODUCTION (5-10 minutes)

A. Moderator Introduction

B. Purpose: To share thoughts and opinions about a number of issues surrounding the Food Stamp Program. We are meeting with people from all different types of backgrounds today so that we have a good representation of U.S. consumers' views on these issues.

C. Audiotaping discussion

D. Ground rules

1. You don't have to raise your hand to say something.
2. Please speak one at a time; don't interrupt
3. Speak up/speak loudly
4. We want to hear your opinions and experiences; we want your honest opinions. You don't have to agree with others. There are no right or wrong answers, just different points of view.
5. Your name will never be associated with what you say; it will be kept confidential.

NOTE: PRINT THE SECTIONS BELOW ON A SEPARATE PIECE OF PAPER AND PROVIDE AS A HANDOUT FOR PARTICIPANTS TO FOLLOW AS MODERATOR READS OUT LOUD.

READ OMB BURDEN STATEMENT: Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average two hours and 20 minutes per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. **An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.** Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Services, Office of Research, Nutrition and Analysis, Alexandria, VA 22302 (0584-0524). Do not return the completed form to this address.

The research records that will be collected and used for this study may include an opinion survey, written notes, and an audiotape made during your participation in the focus group discussion. However, your comments and survey responses will be shared only in the aggregate with those from the other participants. Aggregated information/results from this study may be presented in meetings or in internal reports to the USDA Food and Nutrition Service. Aggregated information/results from this study and portions of audio recordings (with no identification of individuals by name) may be presented in meetings or oral presentation to the USDA Food and Nutrition Service. Your name, and any information that can be traced back to you, will not be included in any reports or meetings to the USDA.

6. The discussion will end in two hours.
7. I need to make sure I have everyone's consent to participate in this discussion and that you agree to and understand the terms of the consent form you signed; does anyone not want to participate; if so, you are free to go; likewise, if anyone else decides that he or she does not want to participate once we get started, please rest assured that you are free to leave at any point.

#### E. Participant Introductions

1. What's your first name?
2. How long have you lived in the area?
3. **HISPANIC:** How long have you lived in the United States? What is your country of origin?
4. Please tell everyone about your household. Who lives at home with you?

## II. Media Habits (5-10 minutes)

A. HANDOUT A – HAND OUT BEFORE GROUP IN WAITING AREA. USE AS A GUIDE.

To start with, let's talk about where you go to get information.

B. What media sources do you watch, listen to, or read to get information and/or news? PROBE: TV? What shows? Commercials? Radio? Internet? Newspaper? Magazines?

C. How often do you watch, listen to, or read from these sources in any given day? PROBE: TV? Radio? Internet? Newspapers?

D. When do you normally watch, listen to, or read from these sources? PROBE: At night? Daytime? Weekends?

E. What type of information are you normally looking for? PROBE: News? Entertainment? Sports? Something else?

F. From what information sources do you most prefer to obtain information about health-related programs? Why? PROBE: TV? Family? Friends? Physicians? Radio?

## III. Participants' Awareness of the FSP (10-15 minutes)

A. Tell me what you know about the Food Stamp Program. PROBE: What are some of the benefits? Any drawbacks? What is its purpose? What role does nutrition play, if any?

B. Who do you think is eligible to receive food stamps? How are they perceived? How does one apply for food stamps? IF APPROPRIATE: Does a person's age or family status make a difference regarding who qualifies? IF NECESSARY: Can older residents or people without children qualify?

C. Why do you think that people who are eligible for the program would not apply? PROBE: What stops people from applying? Is there anything negative associated with the program? Is it difficult to apply? Why do you think people do apply?

D. How did you first hear about the Food Stamp Program? On TV? Radio? Poster? Government office? Other?

E. What do you think encourages people to apply for food stamps? What would encourage them, if anything? Why?

#### IV. Participant Reaction to Radio Spots (15-20 minutes)

Now we're going to shift gears and review some ideas for telling people about the Food Stamp Program.

HANDOUT B: On the piece of paper that I'm handing out, you will see the names of several different radio announcements which we will be listening to. Please note that there is a number next to each announcement. I'm going to play the announcements and I want you rate each one using the scale provided and then circle the one you liked the best. Any questions before we get started?

- A. PLAY ALL ANNOUNCEMENTS (See Attachment F.)
- B. Now, please fill out Handout B. (One for each of the spots.)
- C. Let's see a show of hands. Who preferred the first one? The second? The third? (Continued as needed.) RECORD
- D. It seems that most of you prefer announcement X.
- E. What did you particularly like about this one? What caught your attention? What is it trying to tell you?
- F. What, if anything, do you dislike about it? How would you change it to make it better?
- G. Does it help you better understand the goals of the Food Stamp Program? How so?
- H. Ok. Let's talk about announcement X.
- I. What did you particularly like about this one? What caught your attention? What is it trying to tell you?
- J. What, if anything, do you dislike about it? How would you change it to make it better?
- A. Does it help you better understand the goals of the Food Stamp Program? How so?
- B. Great. Let's talk about announcement X.
- C. What did you particularly like about this one? What caught your attention? What is it trying to tell you?

- D. What, if anything, do you dislike about it? How would you change it to make it better?
- E. Does it help you better understand the goals of the Food Stamp Program? How so?
- F. Overall, which announcement does the best job of encouraging eligible people to apply for Food Stamps? Why?
- G. Which announcement is more likely to make you stop and listen? Why?

**V. ENGLISH LANGUAGE GROUPS ONLY:** Participant Reaction to TV Spot (10-15 minutes) (See Attachment G.)

I'd like everyone to take a look at one TV advertising concept. We will be watching the TV announcement tonight. After we have viewed it, please fill out HANDOUT C.

I just want to emphasize that we are not trying to sell you anything through these ads; they are just being used here tonight to help us develop an educational campaign for the public.

A. Advertisement 1 –

1. What is this telling you?
2. What did you learn, if anything, from this commercial about the Food Stamp Program?
3. What do you like about this commercial? Does it appeal to you?
4. What do you dislike about this commercial?
5. To what extent does this ad seem relevant or meaningful to someone who may be eligible for the program? Why or why not? More specifically, what do you think of the kitchens and the clothing the people are wearing? IF NECESSARY: Can most consumers relate to these people and locations or not?
6. In your opinion, how likely will this commercial encourage someone who is eligible to apply for Food Stamps?

VI. Participant Reaction to other USDA Outreach Materials (15-20 minutes)

We've listened to radio announcements and viewed one TV spot for the Food Stamp Program today.

- A. Are there any other ways you think the Food Stamp Program should present program information to people? How else can the program reach and educate potential participants?
- B. What are your thoughts about a presentation that local organizations and clinics could use to help inform people about the program? NOTE: PROVIDE AN EXPLANATION. Would this be effective? Why or why not? Would you or others be willing to sit through a presentation? Why?
- C. If you were listening to a presentation about the Food Stamp Program, what type of information would you expect to receive? What type of information would consumers want to receive? Why?
- D. HANDOUT D. On this Handout, you will see a list of the types of content that may be presented to potential food stamp recipients. Take a moment and read through the topics. Once you have read through the list, please rank the topics in order of importance to potential participants, where 1 is the most important and 5 is the least important.
- E. USNG HANDOUT D. Which topics seem most relevant? Most interesting? What topics, if any, are missing from this list? Which topics are unnecessary? Which would you remove? Why?
- F. Which topic(s) would be most important to eligible individuals? Why?
- G. What other ideas or suggestions do you have about how the Food Stamp Program can provide eligible participants information? How do you think individuals would like to receive this information?

We have a few more pieces of information about the Food Stamp Program that we'd like you to take a look at and provide us feedback. First, let's look at a brochure about the program.

HAND OUT BROCHURE. ALLOW TIME FOR PARTICIPANTS TO READ THROUGH THE BROCHURE. (See Attachment H.)

- H. What do you particularly like about this brochure? Does it catch your attention? Is the information clear and easy to understand? Why?
- I. What, if anything, do you dislike about this brochure? Why?

- J. Where would you expect to find a brochure like this?
- K. To what extent does it encourage eligible people to apply for the Food Stamp Program? Why do you say that?
- L. If someone received this brochure, do you think they would consider applying? Why?

HISPANIC AUDIENCES ONLY: INCLUDE KEY SPANISH-LANGUAGE MESSAGES DEVELOPED BY FH HISPANIA. (See Attachment I.).

Next, we'd like to get your feedback to messages about the Food Stamp Program. Please read each statement. When you're done, tell us how motivating each statement is

HANDOUT E.

- M. What is your reaction to this #1? What does it communicate to you?
- N. What do you like about it? Why?
- O. What do you dislike? Why?
- P. How easy or hard to understand is it? Why?
- Q. Does it motivate you to get more information about the Food Stamp Program? Why?
- R. Does it motivate you to visit the FSP Web site or call the 1-800 number for more information? Why?
- S. What information does this statement leave out that you would like to know?

REPEAT FOR EACH MESSAGE

VII. Preferred Media Sources (5-10 minutes)

- A. If someone needed information about the program, where do you think they would go to find information about the Food Stamp Program? PROBE: Call the local office? Search the Web? Contact a community clinic or other local organization? TV? Radio?
- B. Where would they prefer to get this information about the Food Stamp Program? PROBE: TV? Radio? Internet? Newspapers? Posters/pamphlets around the community? Brochures? Over the phone? The mail?



II. Wrap-Up (5 minutes)

What do you feel are the most important points we discussed tonight?

Thank you for your help today!

### MEDIA HABITS – HANDOUT A

(Handout A will be given to participants prior to the start of the discussion group.  
Time required to fill out is accounted for in the burden hours.)

1. What media sources do you watch, listen to, or read to get information and/or news? *Please list below.*

2. Thinking about a typical day, how often do you access the following media sources to obtain information and/or news?

	All Of The Time	Most Of The Time	Some Of The Time	Not Very Often	Not At All
Television	5	4	3	2	1
Radio	5	4	3	2	1
Newspaper	5	4	3	2	1
Magazine	5	4	3	2	1
Internet search engines such as Google and Yahoo!	5	4	3	2	1
Internet Health or News Sites such as CNN.com <sup>1</sup>	5	4	3	2	1
Billboards	5	4	3	2	1
Brochures/pamphlets	5	4	3	2	1

3. What type of information are you normally looking for? *Please describe below.*

4. From what information sources do you most prefer to obtain information about health-related programs? *Please describe below.*

<sup>1</sup> For Spanish-speaking groups: Univision.com

**Food Stamp Program Radio Announcements – HANDOUT B**  
 (Handout B will be distributed when the moderator reaches Section IV in the discussion guide. (Attachment E.)

After listening to the potential radio announcements for the Food Stamp Program, please answer the following questions for each of the announcements.

1. Using a five-point scale, where 5 = excellent and 1 = Poor, how well did RADIO SPOT X accomplish each of the following: (*Circle your answer.*)

	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
Tells the purpose of the Food Stamp Program	5	4	3	2	1
Tells who is eligible to participate in the Food Stamp Program	5	4	3	2	1
Encourages eligible people to apply	5	4	3	2	1
Catches your attention	5	4	3	2	1

2. Using a five-point scale, where 5 = excellent and 1 = Poor, how well did RADIO SPOT X accomplish each of the following: (*Circle your answer.*)

	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
Tells the purpose of the Food Stamp Program	5	4	3	2	1
Tells who is eligible to participate in the Food Stamp Program	5	4	3	2	1
Encourages eligible people to apply	5	4	3	2	1
Catches your attention	5	4	3	2	1

3. Using a five-point scale, where 5 = excellent and 1 = Poor, how well did RADIO SPOT X accomplish each of the following: (*Circle your answer.*)

	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
Tells the purpose of the Food Stamp Program	5	4	3	2	1
Tells who is eligible to participate in the Food Stamp Program	5	4	3	2	1
Encourages eligible people to apply	5	4	3	2	1
Catches your attention	5	4	3	2	1

4. In your opinion, which radio announcement does the best job of telling the purpose of the Food Stamp Program? (*Circle your answer.*)

1	Radio Announcement 1
2	Radio Announcement 2
3	Radio Announcement 3
	Continued as Needed

5. Overall, which radio announcements do you like the most?

1	Radio Announcement 1
2	Radio Announcement 2
3	Radio Announcement 3
	Continued as Needed

**Food Stamp Program TV Announcement – HANDOUT C  
ENGLISH LANGUAGE ONLY**

(Handout C will be distributed when the moderator reaches Section V in the discussion guide. (Attachment E.)

After viewing the TV announcement for the Food Stamp Program, please answer the following questions.

1. Using a five-point scale, where 5 = excellent and 1=Poor, how well did TV SPOT 1 accomplish each of the following: (*Circle your answer.*)

	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Fair</b>	<b>Poor</b>
Tells the purpose of the Food Stamp Program	5	4	3	2	1
Tells who is eligible to participate in the Food Stamp Program	5	4	3	2	1
Encourages eligible people to apply	5	4	3	2	1
Catches your attention	5	4	3	2	1

**Food Stamp Program Presentation - HANDOUT D**

(Handout D will be distributed when the moderator reaches Section VI in the discussion guide. (Attachment E.)

The below list illustrates the topics and types of information that could be presented to potential Food Stamp Program participants

1. After reading through the list of topics below, please rank these topics in order of importance to potential participants– where **1 equals the MOST important** to you and **4 equals the LEAST important to you**.

Rank	Topic
	Learn about the Food Stamp Program
	Learn about Eligibility Rules
	How to Gain Access to Food Stamps
	What To Expect Once You Have Applied

**Food Stamp Program Presentation - HANDOUT E**

(Handout E will be distributed when the moderator reaches Section VI in the discussion guide. (Attachment E.)

1. Using a five-point scale, where **1 means not at all motivating** and **5 means extremely motivating**, please tell us the extent to which each statement would motivate you or someone you know to learn more about the Food Stamp Program.

	<b>Extremely Motivating</b>	<b>Very Motivating</b>	<b>Somewhat Motivating</b>	<b>Not Very Motivating</b>	<b>Not at all Motivating</b>	<b>Not Sure</b>
<b>General Hispanic Groups Only</b>						
The Food Stamp Program is a food and nutrition program that helps individuals and families live healthier.	5	4	3	2	1	6
More than 16 million people qualify for food stamp benefits, including more than three million Hispanic households, but are not enrolled in the FSP. Don't assume you and your family doesn't qualify. Call 1-800-221-5689 for an information packet.	5	4	3	2	1	6
You can receive help to determine if you may be eligible for food stamp benefits. Call toll-free 1-800-221-5689, visit a local food stamp office or community-based partner, or access the free pre-screening tool online at <a href="http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp">www.fns.usda.gov/fsp</a> .	5	4	3	2	1	6
FNS is committed to working with community-based organizations and partners to improve food security and nutrition among millions eligible for the FSP. You can help make a difference by increasing awareness and access to this food and nutrition program.	5	4	3	2	1	6

	<b>Extremely Motivating</b>	<b>Very Motivating</b>	<b>Somewhat Motivating</b>	<b>Not Very Motivating</b>	<b>Not at all Motivating</b>	<b>Not Sure</b>
<b>Elderly Hispanic Groups Only</b>						
The FSP is a food and nutrition program that helps elderly Hispanics eat healthier.	5	4	3	2	1	6
Nearly 1 in 5 Hispanic elders could qualify for food stamp benefits. According to figures released by the Food and Nutrition Service in 2005, only nine percent of all food stamp benefits go to households with elderly persons. Don't assume you don't qualify. Call 1-800-221-5689 for an information packet.	5	4	3	2	1	6
You can receive help to determine if you may be eligible for food stamp benefits. Call toll-free 1-800-221-5689 for an information packet, visit a local food stamp office or access the free prescreening tool online at <a href="http://www.fns.gov/fsp">www.fns.gov/fsp</a> .	5	4	3	2	1	6
The FSP is a food and nutrition program that can help your loved ones eat better and lead healthier lives.	5	4	3	2	1	6



2. Please look at the four statements again. Rank them from 1 to four, where **1 represents the MOST motivating message** and **4 represents the LEAST motivating message**.

<b>General Hispanic Groups ONLY</b>	
	The Food Stamp Program is a food and nutrition program that helps individuals and families live healthier.
	More than 16 million people qualify for food stamp benefits, including more than three million Hispanic households, but are not enrolled in the FSP. Don't assume you and your family doesn't qualify. Call 1-800-221-5689 for an information packet.
	You can receive help to determine if you may be eligible for food stamp benefits. Call toll-free 1-800-221-5689, visit a local food stamp office or community-based partner, or access the free pre-screening tool online at <a href="http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp">www.fns.usda.gov/fsp</a> .
	FNS is committed to working with community-based organizations and partners to improve food security and nutrition among millions eligible for the FSP. You can help make a difference by increasing awareness and access to this food and nutrition program.
<b>Elderly Hispanic Groups ONLY</b>	
	The FSP is a food and nutrition program that helps elderly Hispanics eat healthier.
	Nearly 1 in 5 Hispanic elders could qualify for food stamp benefits. According to figures released by the Food and Nutrition Service in 2005, only nine percent of all food stamp benefits go to households with elderly persons. Don't assume you don't qualify. Call 1-800-221-5689 for an information packet.
	You can receive help to determine if you may be eligible for food stamp benefits. Call toll-free 1-800-221-5689 for an information packet, visit a local food stamp office or access the free prescreening tool online at <a href="http://www.fns.gov/fsp">www.fns.gov/fsp</a> .
	The FSP is a food and nutrition program that can help your loved ones eat better and lead healthier lives.

3. Considering your first choice above, why did you rank this one highest?