**Focus Group Protocol**Science to Practice: Developing and testing a marketing strategy for   
preventing alcohol-related problems in college communities

**PREPARING FOR THE FOCUS GROUP**

**Developing a question set**

Prevention Research Center (PRC) and Silver Gate Group (SGG) have developed a schedule of questions (see Attachment 5) which will:

ensure that each group is given adequate opportunity to discuss all the key issues in a similar fashion;

help the facilitator to stay on track and on time

**Types of Questions**

In order to encourage open exchanges and discussion among focus group participants, the set of questions will include:

***Introductory questions***: These questions are intended to get participants discussing the issue in general before homing in on particular issues;

***Linking questions***: These questions enable the facilitator to move from the broad general discussion, following the introductory question, to the more specific areas of interest;

***Key questions***: These questions will address the key issues for the focus group session.

**Invitation to participants and briefing note**

We will send written invitations to participants well in advance of the focus groups. Invitations will include a briefing note that:

Explains the purpose of the focus groups;

Describes what taking part in the focus groups will involve for the individual participant;

Explains how issues of confidentiality will be dealt with;

Makes clear that participation is voluntary and offers alternative options for expressing their views where appropriate;

Describes how results will be analyzed and reported;

Explains that individual responses will not be attributable;

Describes what will be done with outputs, suggestions for action etc;

Offers a contact point for further information.

**The facilitator and recorder**

We will have a facilitator and recorder at each focus group. The recorder will take notes to capture the discussion. The facilitator will lead the focus group. This involves:

Setting the scene, explaining the purpose of the focus group;

Introducing participants to the topics for discussion;

Keeping the group on time and focused on the topics;

Encouraging participation from all the group members;

Providing a summary of the discussion from time to time to check appropriate understanding of participants' comments.

Ensuring that all the key issues are addressed

**How long will the focus group last?**

The focus group will take approximately one hour.

**Location**

We will select focus group locations using the following criteria:

Participants will be free from interruptions and distractions;

Participants will be able to see each other and hear each other easily. U-shaped seating arrangements or arrangements where everyone is around one table tend to work best;

The facilities are comfortable and make it pleasant for participants to sit and talk to each other for up to one hour.

**RUNNING THE FOCUS GROUP**

**Materials needed**

We will assure that we have materials on hand that are needed to run the focus group, including:

Notepads and pens or pencils

Flip chart and markers

Cards (or badges, stickers etc) for writing participants’ names on

Watch or clock

Focus group question schedule

**Preparation / set up**

The facilitator will arrive at the location before the participants and ensure that:

Any refreshments are in place

The room and seating arrangements enable participants to see and hear one another

The venue is comfortable and conducive to discussion.

**Welcoming the participants and introductory briefing**

After welcoming the participants to the group session, the facilitator will:

Introduce themselves and any assistants to the group and explain their roles and such things as domestics, timescales etc;

Ask people to introduce themselves, when not already known to one another or to the facilitator;

Explain once more the purpose of the focus groups and re-iterate the points covered in the briefing note, particularly:

o The fact that the main focus will be on developing and testing a marketing strategy for preventing alcohol-related problems at colleges;

o That individual responses are anonymous as no names will be noted in any reports.;

Explain how the session will operate, that is:

o Beginning with open discussion;

o Focusing in on certain questions; and ideally

o Finishing with suggestions for action/improvement;

Ask for any questions or issues that need clarified.