

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:

Attachment 4

- 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.