

Appendix C: CIS Focus Group Protocol and Moderator's Guide

INTRODUCTION

(Welcome participants) - Thank you in advance for choosing to participate in this research. We greatly appreciate your time and participation.

(Introduce moderator/recorder) - My name is _____ and this is *(introduce co-moderator and/or recorder)* _____. We work for ICF International—an organization that conducts research to evaluate programs like the Census in Schools program. In addition to you here today, we will be visiting with a number of administrators and teachers who participated in the Census in Schools program in other parts of the country. At the end, we will compile everything we have learned from all our visits into a report that will be provided to the Census Bureau.

(Explain Census in Schools program) - The Census Bureau established the Census in Schools program as an integral component of the communications campaign. Census in Schools helped to educate the next generation about what the Census means to their country, community, and family. When local schools decide to include Census ideas in their curriculum, students learned about the important role the Census has played throughout American history and increased their awareness of the upcoming 2010 Census. For students who came from homes where English may be a second language or where there is a low level of participation in the decennial count, the Census in Schools program also represented an opportunity for students to teach their parents about the importance of participating in this national, civic exercise and the central role it plays in the annual allocation of more than \$400 billion of government funding.

(Focus participants in on objectives) - The goals of our discussion today are to ask you to provide your insight into ways that the program can be continued and improved, and what changes may benefit the program for the 2020 Census. In other words, we want to know what will work, what will not work and ways that the program can be improved. You are in an excellent position to help us with that because you can inform us about your organization's experience as a Census in Schools participant and the process of implementing the program in your schools. Your perspectives are of great value to us no matter how involved you were compared to other Census in Schools participants.

(Explain focus group procedure) - The session today will last 90 minutes, and we will not take a formal break. Please feel free to leave the room at any time if you need to. Each of us has a role to play.

- I serve as an impartial data gatherer and discussion regulator (if applicable)-, with help from my co-moderator _____.
- Our note-taker serves as a recorder of what you are saying — please know that s/he is not recording your names.
- You serve as experts based on your experience with the Census in Schools Program.

(Voluntary Participation/Privacy Act) - Your participation is voluntary – if you choose not to participate, or if you don't wish to answer a question, there won't be any negative consequences to you. No data or response will be linked to any individual by name. If we quote something you said in our report, we will not identify you or your school as the source of the quote. We will analyze your responses as part of a group.

We are asking all of you to maintain confidentiality, and we need to know that we can count on each of you. Can we all agree that what is said in this room stays in this room?

(Hand out informed consent document to participants and review with the group) This is a statement for you to sign. It assures us that you are volunteering to participate and it assures you we are taking steps to keep your information private. Please read the statement and sign it before we get started. *(Allow 2-3 minutes for participants to read and sign. Obtain signed agreement from all participants)*

Please note that we cannot conduct this focus group unless the protocol and the informed consent forms display valid OMB Control Numbers. Furthermore, you do not need to participate unless the protocols and forms have a valid OMB Control Number. The OMB Control Number is: 0607-XXXX. This collection expires September 30, 2011.

(Explain ground rules) - To make our discussion go smoothly, it helps to lay out some ground rules:

- Please speak clearly and one at a time.
- Please avoid sidebar conversations.
- There are no right or wrong answers.
- We want to hear the good and the bad.
- We respect and value differences of opinion.

I will read some questions throughout the session for you to discuss. Feel free to expand beyond these specific questions in your answers. The best focus groups are those where participants feel free to explore ideas without limiting them to specific answers.

(Check for participant questions) - Are there any questions before we begin?

QUESTIONS AND PROMPTS

Note: Throughout the questions, if the Focus Group participants all represent a single school, we'll substitute the actual name of that school for "your school." So, for example, we'd say "about how Polk Elementary School became involved..."

1. We'd like to start by discussing ways in which schools can become involved in the Census in School program – the decision process schools may go through to sign up as a Partner. How can schools become aware of the program, and what may prompt your school to sign up? Let's talk about awareness first:

1a. Awareness –

- Your individual reaction:
 - What is the best way for you to become aware of this program in the future?
 - What aspects of the program or awareness of the program would lead you to participate actively in the program
- Your school:
 - What is the best way for your school to become aware of this program in the future?
 - What aspects of the program or awareness of the program would lead your school to participate actively in the program

1b. Decision – Take a look at a list of some factors that may prompt schools to participate (on flip chart or handout sheet). Which of these is important to you? Of all of them, which would you say is the most important?

- To make the next generation more aware of the importance or significance of the Census to improve their response rates when they grow to be eligible to complete the Census
- To make parents more aware of the importance or significance of the Census to improve their response rates in the 2020 Census
- To ensure a fair representation of your school's population or other target population
- To ensure a fair share of federal funding for your school population
- To build the perception of your school as a good public citizen

- Would you add any items to the list? [Add items based on participants' suggestions]
- Which of these is important to you?
- Of all of them, which would you say is the most important? Which is the second most important?
- Are there any reasons why a school may elect NOT to participate in the CIS program?
 - Can you provide examples?

1c. Context – How do you see the program as fitting into your curriculum?

2. Now we'd like you to think of specific items such as materials and curriculum that may both benefit the goal of Census in Schools, which is to increase participation rate in the Census, and teaching children

in the class room. I'll open up first for your general comments and then I'll introduce some specific topics that I'd like to hear more about.

2a. General - If you were the designated point of contact at your school for this program, what is your general feeling about being a Census in Schools point of contact for your school?

2b. What materials or processes do you think are necessary for the Census in Schools program to be a success? (*Refer interviewee back to the seven factors listed in 1b*)

2c. Materials - The materials provided by the Census in Schools are a key part of the program. What types of materials do you think are necessary, and what is the best way to obtain them? Which types of materials do you foresee as being the most useful or the most popular, and which may be less useful or popular? (To aid your thought process we have provided examples of materials from the 2010 Census in Schools program). Do you think designing your own materials is beneficial as well?

2c. Census Bureau Website - In what ways do you foresee using the Census Bureau Website for future school-related activities? "Show State Facts for Students" was designed to easily fit into grade 3-5 curriculum and is the most used feature on the site. Would something like this that is online and fits exactly into what you are teaching be more preferred than a new lesson plan?

2d. Communication - Do you foresee any reason for you to interact with the Census directly, for example, by contacting a Census representative? Do you think that direct access to a Census representative would be helpful? Under what circumstances would you have a need to contact a Census Bureau representative about the program? What type of communication modes do you prefer? For example, do you prefer personal contact via telephone or via email?

2e. Out-of-Class efforts - Do you think your school will do anything to promote the Census in addition to in class lessons or activities? For example, make school-wide announcements?

2f. Student/Parent response - How do you think your students will react to Census in Schools materials? Do you think their views of the Census will change as a result of Census-related class activities and Family Take Home Materials? Do you think parent's views of the Census will change as a result of Census-related class activities and Family Take Home Materials?

2g. Teacher response - How widely do you think participation will spread through your school? Will additional materials from the Census be an added burden to the normal workload? Can you give us some examples?

3. Now let's talk about what Census should be doing to develop Census in Schools as a strong and successful program. In your answers to these questions, we hope to find creative suggestions for ways to attract and engage educators in the years leading to the next Census, with the understanding that financial support may not be feasible as a mainstay. Keeping this in mind:

3a. Are there any specific approaches you believe the Census in Schools program should definitely implement?

3b. Are there any specific approaches you believe the Census in Schools program should avoid?

3c. Would you like to see a Census in Schools program in your school in-between the Census that is conducted every ten years? Would you participate in such a program? What are the ideal elements that such a program would need to contain in order for you to implement it at your school or in your class room?

4. If we've missed any topics today, do you have anything to add?

CONCLUSION

Remind the group that we ask them not to discuss any comments they heard in the group today.

This concludes our discussion. Thank you for taking the time to share your opinions and experiences with us. Your thoughts are valuable to our efforts to inform the Census in Schools program on these matters. We will now distribute the \$50 payment and we will ask each of you to sign a receipt.