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International Trade Administration  
Qualitative Client Interviews

**Pre-recruitment and Focus Group Discussion Guide for:  
Client Needs Segmentation**

**Pre-recruitment script:**

Hello. My name is [researcher name] and I am calling from the U.S. Commercial Service's Process Improvement Team. We are looking at ways to improve the export assistance services that we provide to companies like yours. We are holding group discussions with exporters in your area to learn more about exporters' needs, some of the difficulties you face and what we can do to better serve you and help you to be more successful exporters. We would like to invite you to participate in a discussion with about 7 other exporters at [location]. The discussion will last for about 1½ hours and will take place on [date and time ] or [date and time]. Which one is most convenient for you? Great. We can send you an e-mail reminder with directions. Is [read e-mail address] the best address to use? Thank you very much. We look forward to seeing you on [date and time].

**Focus Group Discussion Guide**

**Introduction**

Hi. My name is [name] from the Commercial Service's Process Improvement Team and I'll be leading today's discussion. Thank you all for joining us today to discuss your exporting needs and experiences.

Before we begin, I'd like to encourage you all to share your ideas and comments. There are no right or wrong answers. All of your thoughts and opinions are valuable to us and can help us to improve the export assistance services that we provide to companies like yours.

Let's start with introductions. Please tell us your name, what product / service you export and where you export.

**Exporting needs / challenges**

You've all had some experience with exporting. What are your biggest exporting challenges? [brainstorm, and write down on flip chart]. How would you answer these questions:

- I would be more successful at exporting if \_\_\_\_\_
- I would expand my exporting activities if \_\_\_\_\_

As a group, can we reach consensus on the 5 most significant exporting challenges that you face?

Ok, we have agreed that these are the 5 most significant exporting challenges that you experience: [write on flip chart]. Let's think about these challenges and talk about what you have been doing to overcome these challenges.

Exporting challenges	Actions to overcome	Where do you get assistance	Perfect solution

How does [export challenge 1] affect your ability to export?

What are some things that you do to overcome [export challenge #1]? How effective is it?

Do you ever seek outside assistance for overcoming this challenge? Where do you turn for assistance?

In a perfect world, what would the perfect solution be for this challenge?

[Continue for all 5 challenges]

### **Expectations**

What are your exporting goals?

How do you define success in relation to your exporting activities? What does your boss, your company expect to achieve from exporting?

We've talked about some of your exporting difficulties and your goals. What do you need to be able to achieve your goals?

What do you need to improve your success at exporting? What are some factors that seem to hinder or limit your success at exporting?

What do you need to expand your exporting activities? Are there particular reasons why you have not attempted to export to additional markets? Why?

### **Ideal Export Assistance Services**

We've discussed some of the ideal solutions that can help you to export and to be more successful at exporting. Let's discuss these in more detail...[ask about the ideal solutions mentioned earlier, and ask about the various Commercial Service services such as matchmaking, due diligence, market research...]

You mentioned that [solution] would help you to be more successful at exporting, what characteristics should [solution] have, what specifically would it be like?

[Continue for all solutions mentioned by clients]

[Show main points of Commercial Service services such as Statement of Work, report templates] You may be aware that the Commercial Service currently provides services related to [service ] as described in these materials. Please take a few minutes to review the materials.

What do you think about a service like this?

Is there anything that you like about this service? Is there anything about this service that you think can help you to overcome exporting barriers or help you to be more successful? What? How would it help?

Is there anything that you don't like about this service? How can we make it better? What can be done to make it more effective to help you overcome your export barriers and help you to be more successful at exporting?

[Repeat for remaining services]

Thank you very much for your participation. Your comments and suggestions are very helpful to us. We will take your ideas into consideration as we work to improve the export-related services that we provide.

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