

## 2015 NSCG Contact Strategy Focus Group Protocol

### I. Background (5 minutes)

- A. Hello everyone, my name is \_\_\_\_ . Thank you for coming out tonight
- B. Introduce idea of a moderator led discussion
- C. Taping
  - 1. Want to hear from everyone; one speaker at a time.
- D. If you disagree with someone else's comment, that's ok. But please be respectful.
- E. Occasionally I may need to cut someone off to ensure that everyone is heard or to ensure we cover all topics
  - 1. Length: 90 minutes Logistics...bathroom location, beverages, snacks.
  - 2. Please set your phones on silent or turn them off.
  - 3. Cannot answer questions until the end of the group.
- F. Topic: Mailing materials and messaging

Discussions will be based on your opinions about pieces that you receive in the mail, which includes the envelopes and messages you receive.

There are no right or wrong answers. It's okay to say that you don't know. The goal of this group is to learn about your opinions and experiences so the Census Bureau can improve its methods.

### II. Warm-up (10 minutes)

Please introduce yourselves using your first name and tell us where you live and one activity that you enjoy doing.

Today we will be talking about the messages you receive in the mail, how you react to them, and what motivates you to open a piece of mail and respond to a request. Your input will affect the way the Census Bureau collects information.

### III. Mail Preferences (10 minutes)

- A. What features of an envelope make it seem important? To what extent do you open all letters? What leads you to open a letter?
- B. Show NSCG envelope:
  - a. When you first see this envelope, what are your first impressions?
  - b. To what extent does this envelope look important?
  - c. If this envelope was mixed in with the other mail you receive at home, do you think you would notice it? How likely would you be to open it?
  - d. What features would help the envelope stand out?
  - e. What features would motivate you to open the envelope? What impact, if any, does the personalization of the name and address have?
  - f. How likely are you to remember receiving this envelope in the mail? Why do you think this?

- i. Do you remember receiving this envelope in the mail? If yes, what was your reaction to it?

#### IV. Letter Content (20 min)

We got this particular group together because we believe that you did not respond to a survey recently sent to you by the Census Bureau. However, it is possible that you responded and we just did not receive your response yet.

- A. What information do you expect to find in a letter asking you to participate in a survey?
- B. What language do you believe is essential to be included in the letter for you to respond?
- C. What is an ideal letter length that would make you more likely to read it?
- D. What information would motivate you to respond?
- E. How often do you receive survey requests in the mail or via email?
  - a. If at least once, what have you seen in other survey requests that you liked?
  - b. If at least once, what have you seen in other survey requests that you did not like?
- F. Show NSCG letter:
  - a. What are your initial impressions of this letter?
  - b. What is the main point of the letter?
  - c. What, if anything, seems to be missing from the letter?
  - d. Who do you believe is sponsoring the survey?
  - e. To what extent would you go to the URL to visit the website? If not, why not?

#### V. Contacts (15 minutes)

- A. If you were taking a survey and it asked you to provide an email address, what type of email address would you provide?
  - a. Would you provide an address you check regularly or a junk mail account?
- B. If you were picked to participate in a survey, how often would you expect to be contacted with requests and reminders if you had not responded yet? At what point would you get annoyed? To what extent would additional contacts and reminders influence your decision whether or not to respond?
- C. What are your opinions on receiving survey requests via text? How about survey reminders? What information should the text contain?

#### VI. Branding (15 minutes)

- A. To what extent have you heard of the National Science Foundation?
  - a. In what capacity do you know of the NSF?
  - b. What do you believe the NSF does?
  - c. What are your opinions of the NSF?
  - d. What do you think is important about the NSF?
  - e. How is the NSF useful?
- B. What, if anything, have you heard about the National Survey of College Graduates?

- a. What are your opinions of the NSCG? In what capacity are you familiar with the NSCG?
- b. What do you think the survey is? What information do you think it collects? Does it sound like a useful survey?
- c. Who sponsors the NSCG?
- C. If you received a survey in the mail from the NSF and you were not familiar with them, what would your reaction be? Would you participate in the survey? What if you had a negative opinion of them, what would your reaction be? Would you participate in the survey?
- D. If you received a survey in the mail from the NSF and you were familiar with them, what would you do? Would you participate in the survey? What if you had a positive opinion of them, what would you do? Would you participate in the survey?

VII. Survey experience **(15 minutes)**

- A. People choose to respond to surveys or not respond for a variety of reasons.
  - a. How likely are you to respond to surveys?
  - b. What factors influence your decision whether to respond?
  - c. The NSCG is a longitudinal survey, meaning that people who are selected to participate are asked to do so for four cycles of the survey, spanning six years.
    - 1. What reasons, if any, would make you respond to one cycle but not the next?
    - 2. What would motivate you to continue?
    - 3. What factors would influence your decision to stop responding?
    - 4. If you wanted to stop responding, what factors could change your mind?
    - 5. Why do you believe people often drop out of a longitudinal survey after completing the first round?

Conclusion:

Closure:

- 1. What recommendations do you have for decreasing non-response in a longitudinal survey?
- 2. Any other ideas for how to improve commitment towards long-term surveys?
- 3. Is there anything else we left out that you want to add?

Before we end the group, I want to remind you that the Census Bureau is committed to keeping your personal information confidential. Census Bureau employees are sworn for life to protect your confidentiality. Any Census Bureau employee who violates Title 13 is subject to a fine up to \$250,000, a prison sentence up to five years, or both. Does anyone have any questions?

Thank you very much for your participation. You can pick up your incentive from the area where you first signed in.